



Paparazzi economics

Actor Janhvi Kapoor reveals paparazzi get paid per photo based on a star's popularity and follow stars for lucrative shots

LEISURE | P2



Sunak faces exodus

Uncertainty rises for UK PM Rishi Sunak amid a mass exodus of 78 senior members of Parliament from his embattled Conservative Party

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Trade trouble

India has recorded a trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, with nine of its top 10 trading partners in 2023-24

BUSINESS | P11



Fantastic feat

Gymnast Dipa Karmakar creates history by becoming first Indian to win a gold at the senior Asian Championships

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

Phase III turnout 74%

Bhubaneswar: A voter turnout of 74.45 per cent was recorded in six LS seats and 42 Assembly constituencies where polling was held simultaneously in the state's third round, an official said Sunday. Of the 94,48,553 voters, 74.45 per cent exercised their franchise Saturday across 10,581 booths. The Sambalpur LS seat registered the highest turnout at 79.50 per cent, followed by Keonjhar (78.97), Dhenkanal (78.01), Puri (75.43), Cuttack (71.20), and Bhubaneswar (64.49).

Rare extension

New Delhi: Army Chief General Manoj Pande will continue to serve in the post till June 30 with the government Sunday extending his tenure by one month, in a rare and unusual move that came amid the Lok Sabha polls. General Pande was to retire from service May 31. The extension to General Pande came nearly five decades after the then Indra Gandhi-led government extended the tenure of Army Chief General GG Bewoor by one year in early 1970s in first such instance.

Landslide toll 670

Melbourne: More than 670 people are assumed to have died in Papua New Guinea's massive landslide, the international Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimated Sunday as rescue efforts continued. Media in the South Pacific nation north of Australia had previously estimated Friday's landslide had buried more than 300 people. Only five bodies had been retrieved from the rubble so far. P10

12 dead in accident

Shahjahanpur: Twelve people, including six women and three children, headed to the Purnagiri temple in Uttarakhand, were killed when a gravel-loaded dumper truck overturned on their bus in this district, police said Sunday. Nine other pilgrims were seriously injured in the Saturday night incident. Purnagiri temple in Uttarakhand's Tanakpur is about 180 km from Shahjahanpur.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I often feel playing with lives of citizens is just a game for them

WEATHER

| | BBSR | CTC |
|----------|--------|--------|
| Max Temp | 33.2°C | 32.8°C |
| Min Temp | 28.6°C | 28°C |
| Humidity | 92% | 87% |
| Rainfall | 0.6mm | 1.4mm |

FORECAST
CLOUDY SKY WITH ONE OR TWO SPELLS OF RAIN

Girls outdo boys in Matric, Plus II annual exams

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 26: Girls outperformed boys in both Class X (matriculation) and Plus II annual examinations carried out by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) and the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) respectively, the results of which were announced Sunday.

The BSE declared the High School Certificate (HSC) examination results Sunday morning with 96.07 per cent of the students clearing the test.

According to a press note issued by the BSE, this year, girls have outshined boys in the examination. The pass percentage of girl students stood at 96.73 while that of boys was 95.39.

As many as 2,644 schools have recorded 100 per cent results, it said. None of the schools in the state registered zero per cent results in the examination, the BSE said in its announcement.

While Khurda district registered the highest pass percentage of 97.98 in the state, Nuapada district reported the lowest pass percentage of 93.91.

The unsuccessful students can apply for rechecking from May 29 to June 12. The registration for the supplementary examination will start from June 10.

The BSE also declared the results of the State Open School Certificate (SOSC) examination and the Madhyama exam. About 59.88 per cent students have cleared the SOSC while 98.12 per cent cleared the Madhyama examination. The annual HSC examination 2024 was conducted



| MATRIC PASS PERCENTAGE | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| 96.07% | |
| PLUS II PASS PERCENTAGE | |
| ARTS | 80.95% |
| SCIENCE | 86.93% |
| COMMERCE | 82.27% |

TIME TO CELEBRATE: Students show the 'V' sign as they celebrate after declaration of High School Certificate (HSC) exam results at Vivekananda Shiksha Kendra in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

from February 20 to March 4 across Odisha.

Similarly, in the higher secondary (Class XII) exam results declared by CHSE, the pass percentages were 80.95 in Arts, 86.93 in Science, and 82.27 in Commerce, with girls surpassing

boys across all streams. The vocational stream recorded a 68.02 per cent pass rate.

As many as 3,84,597 students appeared in the Class XII examination held between February 16 and March 20 this year. In science stream, a total of 1,15,895 candidates

had appeared for the exams, of which 1,00,757 have passed. The pass percentage of boys is 86.21 while it is 87.74 for girls.

In Arts, 2,35,218 students had appeared in the exams. Among them, 1,90,429 have cleared the exams, said the CHSE. The pass

percentage of boys is 72.68, whereas for girls it is 87.56.

In Commerce, a total of 21,308 students passed out of 25,897 who appeared in the examination this year. The pass percentages of boys and girls were 80.40 and 85.55 respectively.

In Arts, a total of 21 higher secondary schools in Odisha have achieved 100 per cent results this year, while in Science 292 higher secondary schools achieved 100 per cent results. The number stood at 92 in the Commerce stream.

7 newborns killed in hospital blaze

HOSPITAL OWNER ARRESTED; LICENCE EXPIRED, DOCTORS NOT QUALIFIED TO TREAT NEWBORN: DELHI POLICE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: A massive fire broke out at a private children's hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar, leaving seven newborns dead, officials said Sunday.

The officials of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) said the blaze broke out at the Baby Care New Born Hospital at around 11:30pm Saturday and soon spread to two other adjacent buildings.

Sixteen fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the blaze, Divisional Fire Officer Rajendra Atwal said. Oxygen cylinders kept in the two-storey building exploded due to which the adjacent buildings were damaged, he said. Another fire official said two boutiques, a portion of IndusInd Bank operating from an adjacent building and a shop on the ground floor were also damaged besides an ambulance and a scooter parked outside the building.

DFS chief Atul Garg said 12 newborns were rescued from



the medical facility but seven of them died. Five babies are undergoing treatment at another hospital, he said, adding some of them have received minor burn injuries. The bodies have been shifted to the GTB Hospital for postmortem, police said.

Condoling the death of children, President Droupadi Murmu prayed for strength to the bereaved parents. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said those responsible for negligence will not be spared. Health Minister

Saurabh Bharadwaj also said strictest punishment will be given to those found negligent or involved in any wrongdoing.

In a post on X, Kejriwal said the government stood with those who lost their children in the fire incident, and added the administration was ensuring proper treatment to the injured.

He said the reasons behind the fire were being probed and those found negligent will not be spared. The police have arrested the owner of the hospital

Dr Naveen Kichi. He had been on the run since the fire outbreak late Saturday, officials said.

Deputy Commissioner of police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary said owner of the hospital Naveen Kichi has been booked under sections 336 (act endangering life of personal safety of others) and 304A (causing death by negligence) at Vivek Vihar police station.

According to eyewitnesses, locals and members of an NGO, Shaheed Seva Dal, were the first responders. Some residents climbed the building from the back side and rescued some of the newborns.

SHOCKING IRREGULARITIES
The private neonatal hospital was operating despite the expiry of its license. It also did not have qualified doctors and had no clearance from the fire department, police said.

The licence issued to the Baby Care New Born Child Hospital by Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS),

Government of Delhi, has already expired March 31.

Even the expired licence issued to the said hospital allowed for five beds only. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary said. The officer said 12 newborns were admitted in the hospital at the time of the incident.

"During the investigations, we got to know that the doctors are not qualified or competent to treat the newborn children in need of Neo-Natal Incentive care, as they are BAMS degree holders only," said the DCP. Meanwhile, officials of the Fire Department said that the hospital has no NOC from the department.

The Delhi government has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the fire tragedy.

"Every single official who is visiting here is tightlipped. They have no answer if the hospital was legal. If the hospital was having any NOC from the fire department," said Ritik, who lost his 10-day-old child.

Student consumes pesticide over poor marks in HSC exam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baisinga/Betanoti, May 26: A 16-year-old boy in Purunapani village under Betanoti block and Baisinga police limits in Mayurbhanj district tried to commit suicide by consuming pesticide over scoring poor marks in the HSC examination, the results of which were published Sunday.

Rajesh Singh, son of Ramjivan Singh, was rushed to the Baisinga hospital from where he was shifted to the Balasore DHH after his health condition deteriorated. Rajesh was staying at his maternal uncle's house in Balasore district for his studies. He appeared the HSC examination at Dinabandhu High School in Angargadia village under Baisinga police limits.

He was expecting to do well in the exams but after results were declared, he found that he could secure only 242 marks and passed in the 'D' grade. Frustrated over his poor performance, he consumed pesticide from a bottle kept in the house to end his life.

THIRD TITLE IN KKR KITTY Kolkata's Knights are 'Super Kings' this IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, May 26: Mitchell Starc was magical. Andre Russell was mesmerising. Gautam Gambhir remained stoic. Shah Rukh Khan hid his emotions behind a mask. Those contrasting pictures vividly conveyed Kolkata Knight Riders' annihilation of Sunrisers Hyderabad in a lopsided final to bag their third Indian Premier League title here Sunday.

In a season of start-to-finish domination, KKR's bowling unit was inch perfect leaving Sunrisers in a shambles while bowling them out for a paltry 113 in 18.3 overs. It was the tournament's

Now, essay contest held at Porsche crash site

Around 100 people, mostly youngsters, participated in the essay competition amid heavy police deployment and were given the topics 'My favourite car', 'If my father was a builder', and 'Ill effects of alcohol' to write on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, May 26: The Congress youth wing in Pune organised an essay writing competition Sunday at the spot of the car crash involving a 17-year-old

in which two persons were killed in the city.

The competition was held at the accident site in the Kalyani Nagar area, where two IT professionals died after their motorcycle was hit by a speeding Porsche allegedly driven by a minor in the early hours of May 19.

The police claim that the teenager was drunk at the time of the accident.

The teenager was initially granted bail by the Juvenile Justice Board, which also asked him to write an essay on road accidents, but following outrage over the lenient treatment and a review application by the police, he was sent to an observation home till June 5.



Around 100 people, mostly youngsters, participated in the essay competition and were given the topics 'My favourite car', 'If my father was a builder', and 'Ill effects of alcohol' to write on.

Congress MLA Ravindra Dhangekar of the Kasbha assembly constituency also participated in the competition.

Talking to reporters, Dhangekar said, "I condemn the

incident in which two youngsters lost their lives. The police should take stringent action against pubs and restaurants that operate beyond permitted time to avert such accidents."

Police personnel were deployed in large numbers for the event. The police have arrested the teenager's father, realtor Vishal Agarwal, and his grandfather, Surendra Agarwal, in connection with the accident. His father was booked under the Juvenile Justice Act for exposing a child to danger by handing over the car to him while knowing that he had no driving license.

The teen's grandfather, Surendra Agarwal, was arrested for the 'illegal confinement' of the driver.

leisure



GEORGE HONOURED WITH THE PALME D'OR

George Lucas and Francis Ford Coppola reflected on their lifelong bond as the *Godfather* director, who just presented *Megalopolis* at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, feted the *Star Wars* visionary with the honorary Palme d'Or, reports *Variety*.

KYLIE DOESN'T OPEN HER WALLET DURING AN OUTING

Reality TV star and make-up mogul Kylie Jenner doesn't always open her wallet during an outing with her friends, says her best friend Anastasia Karanikolaou. In a video shared on TikTok, Stassie said, "Kylie always forgets her purse somehow. She never has a purse! So, it's me."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Ganesh predicts that there may be some disappointments today. The reason could well be your own carelessness. Ganesh advises you to draw some motivation from your superiors some-times. It will only be for your own good.

TAURUS
This day will be filled with a lot of emotional intensity. So says Ganesh. Most of the day you will be driven by your feelings and sentiments and remain absorbed in family issues concerns. You will, nevertheless, not lose out on your professional and business affairs.

GEMINI
You will realise today that your personal life is as important as your professional life. Therefore you will give more importance to your family and will try and spend maximum time with your spouse and children. A day filled with fun and frolic and enjoyment awaits, make the most of it, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will tour a world of fantasy and accomplish beautiful creations in literary and artistic arena. Religious acts or visit to religious spots is likely. You will feel closeness to God. Spiritualism will impact your mind. Ganesh sees it as a fruitful and profitable day.

LEO
You will have to fulfill all your responsibilities carefully, and will be duly rewarded for your troubles. Begin all auspicious work and new projects in the afternoon. Your generosity and capability will keep you at peace today, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will enjoy the freedom of a bird today. There will be no conditions, neither in your domestic life nor in your professional life. Ganesh says this will give a much-needed boost to your levels of confidence. However, the high expectations could bog you down, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that today you will spend with close friends or beloved people. Your romantic nature will surely please the opposite sex. By evening your imagination will be at its peak. Ganesh wishes you all the very best and sends you his greetings

SCORPIO
The day may be slightly challenging today. The day at field may be highly constructive, while in office you may be bogged down with a lot of work. However, romantic relationship may add some spice to your life and offer some surprises. Enjoy to the hilt!

SAGITTARIUS
Unlike chirpy and cheerful, you will be in a grumpy mood today; blame it on the office's petty issues, says Ganesh. Another thing that linger on your mind would be financial matters. Keep yourself balanced and let nothing affect you.

CAPRICORN
You have always believed in living in the present, but today you'll think and plan about the future. The uncertainties of life make you understand the importance of saving for the future contingencies. You will forgive and forget about the pain some of your relationships and loved ones have given you earlier. Sometimes you may feel that others are taking you for a ride, but you'll turn a blind eye to that after a while, as you know patience is your strength.

AQUARIUS
Not everyday is the same day, and today will be one of those unfavourable days, feels Ganesh. Don't get disheartened if things don't turn out as per your expectations, as times will change. Be optimistic and enjoy life to deal with difficult times.

PISCES
You will be filled with extreme energy and enthusiasts in the earlier half of the day. However you will feel sluggish and drained out in the afternoon. The likely reason for this will be the over-enthusiasm you show towards your work in the morning. However, you will still be able to complete all your tasks satisfactorily, says Ganesh.

Janhvi: Celebs are like ration cards

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor recently revealed that paparazzi get paid per photo of a star, depending on the latter's popularity.

So, the film celebrities are like ration cards for the shutterbugs, she said.

Asked if paparazzi indeed turn up out of the blue or are informed beforehand about the stars' schedules, she stated that it depends on the star in focus. "Like now, the promotions for my upcoming film *Mr and Mrs Mahi* are ongoing, so they were called to the airport to click my pictures. But when film promotions are not happening, when I am not going for shoots, when I want to disappear, then, if they want to put in extra effort, and this has happened many times, they follow the car because they get paid for every picture," she said during a

chat with an entertainment agency.

"Every celebrity is like a ration card. Their pictures sell for so much. If your price is high, they will seek you out and follow your car. If the price is not that high, you call the paparazzi. Before the promotions of *Mr and Mrs Mahi* began, I would have travelled via flights at least 25-30 times. But photographers arrived only five to six times," she recalled.

The actress also expressed gratitude to the paparazzi for respecting her request to avoid coming to her gym.



RATNA ON INSTAGRAM IMPACT

Mumbai: Actress Ratna Pathak Shah has shared how people are getting work based on the number of their followers on Instagram. Speaking with *Brut India*, she also said that since she is not on that social media platform, it could be the reason she isn't getting work. The actress revealed that she has been unemployed for over a year now.

The *Golmaal 3* actress was asked if she thinks that nowadays, too much emphasis is put on an actor's looks rather than the craft of it. She said, "Yes, the simple answer is yes. I don't know how to blame actors for that because these are the things that are asked and focused on. Depending on the number of followers on Instagram, people are getting work today. That is what I have heard."

She added, "Nobody approached me for work because I am not on Instagram. So maybe that's the reason why I didn't get work. That's also possible. I have been completely unemployed for a whole year now. So these

are the kinds of things that do seem to matter a lot. What should I also do? Where will one go to learn if an actor wants to learn acting? It's very tough."

The actress rose to prominence when she appeared in the hit TV serial *Idhar Udhar* in the 1980s and garnered widespread recognition for her portrayal of Maya Sarabhai in *Sarabhai vs Sarabhai* (2004-2006).

Ratna made her acting debut with Shyam Benegal's *Mandi* and later featured in popular films such as *Kapoor & Sons*, *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na*, *Ek Main Aur Ekk Tu*, *Khoobsurat*, *Lipstick*, *Under My Burkha*, *Jayeshbhai Jordaar*, *Attack*, and *Dhak Dhak*.



Huma seeks support for indie films

Mumbai: Actress Huma Qureshi hopes brands and companies that spend a whopping amount of money sending people who have nothing to do with films will now find a way to support small and independent films.

The actress' comments come after Anasuya Sengupta became the first Indian actor to win the Best Actress award at the Un Certain Regard segment and Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine as Light* bagged the Grand Prix at the 77th Cannes Film Festival.

The actress took to her Instagram stories and shared a picture of the *All We Imagine as Light* team getting honoured with the Grand Prix,

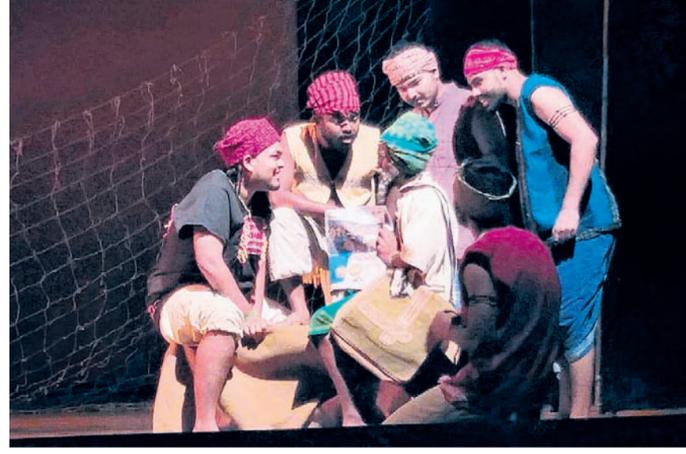
the second-highest award at the Cannes Film Festival.

"So proud of you all, @payalkapadia @kantari_kanmani @divya_prabha and @chhaya.kadam.75. Hope. There is hope," she captioned the image.

She then wrote a post that read: "Cannes Film Festival is a film festival where art is celebrated for art's sake... I really hope some of these brands and companies that spend hundreds of dollars sending people who have nothing to do with films instead find a way to support small and independent films."

"I really am so proud of all the incredible women who have brought home such glory! More power to them and to our home-grown storytellers," she said.

NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL - DAY III



The third evening of the festival witnessed Hindi play *Bedaag* at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Sunday. The drama, written by Joseph Stain and helmed by Bhagirathi Bai Kadam, was staged by the members of Seagull Theatre, Guwahati.

FUN post

PEANUTS



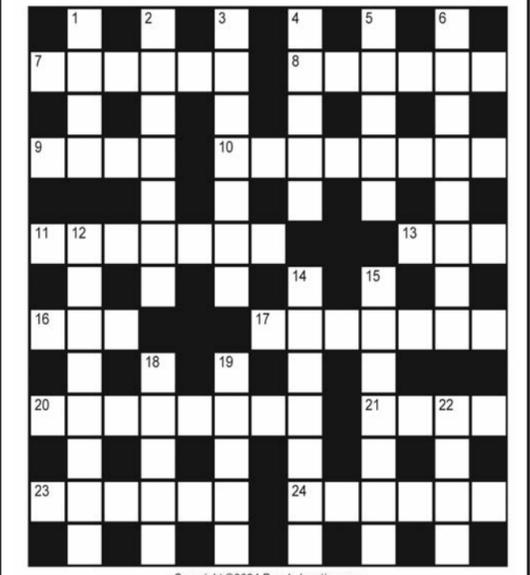
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



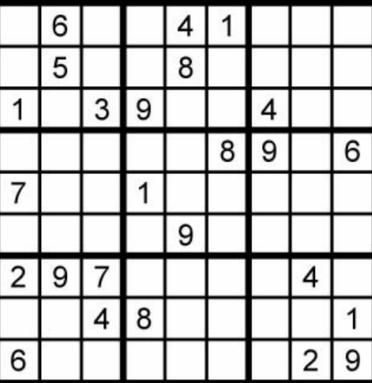
CROSSWORD



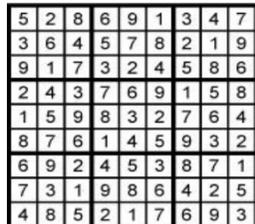
- Across**
- 7 Vanity object
 - 8 On base
 - 9 Switchblade
 - 10 Vigour
 - 11 Tavern item
 - 13 Quagmire
 - 16 French vineyard
 - 17 Postal need
 - 20 Proclaim
 - 21 Engage
 - 23 Jettison
 - 24 Thief
 - 6 Salty treats
 - 12 Olympic runner
 - 14 Qualifiers, in speech or writing
 - 15 Sand dollars, e.g.
 - 18 Man of steel?
 - 19 Keypad key
 - 22 Destroy
- Down**
- 1 Plate
 - 2 Confidential
 - 3 Picayune
 - 4 Pudding type
 - 5 Clergy's concern

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

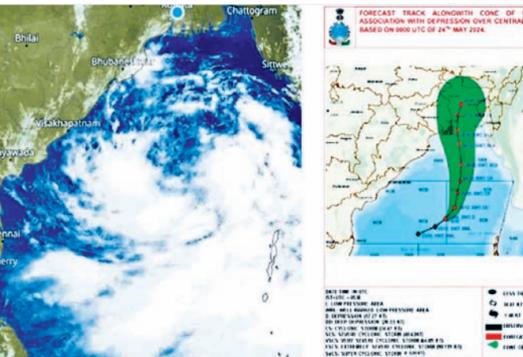


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

CYCLONE REMAL

Rains to pound 4 dists, preparations reviewed



According to IMD, few places in Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Puri, Khurda, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, and Jagatsinghpur districts will experience surface wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph till 8.30 am Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 26: The Met department has issued heavy rainfall warning for four districts of the state in the wake of Cyclone Remal approaching the coast. Under its impact, heavy rainfall of 7 to 11 cm has been predicted for Bhadrak, Balasore, Kendrapara and Mayurbhanj districts.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satyabrata Sahu reviewed the preparations made by the Collectors of the four districts in view of the warning, officials said. Around 20,000 fishing boats were safely berthed and Collectors of the four districts were instructed to use Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) and fire services in case a situation arises, they said.

Sahu said that rainfall has already started in the coastal districts of Odisha since this morning and will intensify with the cyclone making landfall by midnight.

In view of the cyclone, the IMD has hoisted local cautionary signal number 3 at Paradip and Chandbali ports and distant warning signal number 2 (DW-II) for Gopalpur and Puri ports.

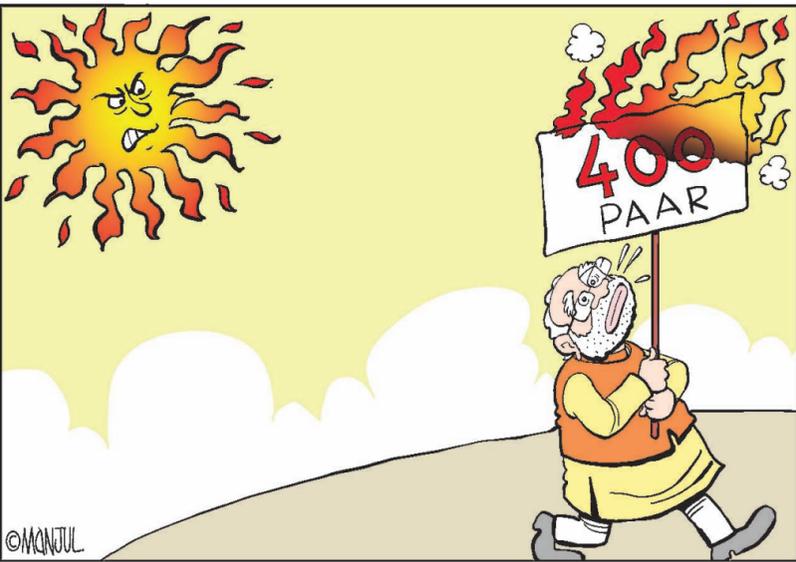
According to the Met department, Cyclone Remal has strengthened into a severe cyclonic storm and is expected to hit the coasts of Bangladesh and West Bengal by Sunday midnight, with winds of 110-120 kmph and gusting up to 135 kmph.

Remal, moving northward, is likely to intensify further before crossing the coasts between Sagar Island (West Bengal) and Khepupara (Bangladesh), near the southwest of Mongla port, around midnight Sunday, the weather office reported.

According to an IMD bulletin, surface wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph would prevail at a few places over the districts of Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Puri, Khurda, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, and Jagatsinghpur till 8.30 am Monday.

Squally wind speed reaching 50-60 kmph, gusting up to 70 kmph, is likely to prevail till Monday morning, it said.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Over ₹80K crore motor vehicle claims pending

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, May 26: As many as 10,46,163 motor accident claims worth ₹80,455 crore are pending across the country, and their numbers have increased constantly between 2018-19 and 2022-23, according to an information received through RTI Act.

The details have been provided by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in response to the query filed by Supreme Court advocate K C Jain in April.

In his query to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Jain had sought to know the total number of motor accident claims pending in the country with state and district-wise details.

He also sought to know the annual break up of claims instituted, disposed of and remaining during the last five years and the initiatives, if any, taken by the Centre for an early disposal of the motor accident claims.

According to IRDAI's information, at the end of the financial years 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23, the number of motor accident claims pending was 9,09,166, 9,39,160, 10,08,332, 10,39,323, and 10,46,163, respectively, with claim amounts of ₹52,713 crore, ₹61,051 crore, ₹70,722 crore, ₹74,718 crore, and ₹80,455 crore, respectively.

BJD claims 85% strike rate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 26: With voting completed in 15 Lok Sabha seats and 105 Assembly segments in the state, both the ruling BJD and the Opposition BJP have claimed they will secure an absolute majority to form the government.

A day after Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik asserted that his party would provide a "very stable" government, his close associate VK Pandian announced Sunday that the BJD's strike rate in the three election phases was 85 per cent.

"BJD is sweeping the elections, we will be having a strike rate of 85 per cent in these three phases," Pandian told reporters.

Similarly, former BJP state president and senior leader KV Singh Deo, during a press conference Sunday, claimed that the saffron party would form the government with a two-thirds majority.

"The BJP will form the government by securing a two-thirds majority in Odisha. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already extended an invitation. There is no doubt about BJP forming a government in the state," Singh Deo said.

Odisha is conducting simul-



taneous polls for its 21 Lok Sabha seats and 147 Assembly segments across four phases. Voting for the first three phases is complete, with the final phase scheduled for June 1.

Asked about the exact number of seats the BJD expected to win, Pandian refrained from giving a specific figure but claimed the regional party was sweeping the polls with an 80 to 85 per cent strike rate.

Pandian also asserted that the BJD had already secured a majority to form the government from the 105 seats where elections had concluded. He expressed confidence that the BJD would gain an even greater majority in the final phase.

"With the blessings of Lord Jagannath and the love of the people of Odisha, BJD will have

TRIBUTES TO BHIKARI BAL

Renowned singer Guru Keshab Chandra Rout and lyricist Brundaban Jena being honoured with 'Bhajan Samrat Bhikari Bal Smruti Samman' at a function to mark the 95th birth anniversary of legendary Bhajan singer Bhikari Bal at Satabdi Bhawan in Cuttack, Sunday



STORM COMING: Sea conditions remained choppy in Puri under the impact of approaching cyclonic storm 'Remal', Sunday

OP PHOTO

Cent per cent success at Tetrahedron

POST NEWS NETWORK

Manguli-Jagatpur, May 26: The Tetrahedron Group of Institutions at Tangi in Cuttack district has clocked cent per cent result in the Plus II exams results of which were announced by the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Odisha Sunday.

Altogether 780 out of 835 students of the private Science College who had appeared the exams got first division. Twenty-two of them secured more than 90 per cent marks, setting a benchmark for the famed institution. With a total of 566 marks, Satyajit Swain topped among students in the Higher Secondary School. Manisha Panda with 550 marks came first among stu-

PLUS II RESULTS



dents of Tetrahedron Women's Higher Secondary School. Both the toppers want to become doctors in future.

Similarly, altogether 33 students have scored 89 per cent, 44

secured 88 per cent, 97 got 85 per cent while 227 students have been awarded 80 per cent.

A total of 343 students scored 75 per cent while 548 got marks of 70 per cent and above.

However, resentment brewed among the students over evaluation, especially of the English paper which has become a subject of discussion among the people. It is learnt that many students who have scored 90 per cent or above have secured abysmally low marks in the English paper.

Meanwhile, a felicitation programme was held on the college premises Sunday where the successful students were given away bouquets and scarves by the founding president of the institution Tridev Behera, who presided over the function.

Behera hoped that following re-evaluation more number of students will stand to secure 90 per cent or above marks.

Jagadev sent to jail for 'vandalising' EVM

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 26: BJP's Khurda Assembly candidate Prasanta Kumar Jagadev was arrested and later sent to jail for allegedly vandalising an electronic voting machine (EVM) in Khurda district, Saturday. Jagadev was agitated as he had to wait in queue for a long time to cast his vote because the machine malfunctioned, officials said Sunday.

Jagadev, the MLA of Chilika, has been fielded from Khurda Assembly segment by BJP. The incident happened Saturday at booth no-114 in Bolagada block's Kaunripatna under Begunia Assembly segment where he is registered as a voter.

He went to the booth along

with his wife, but as the EVM malfunctioned, he had to wait for some time to cast his vote. Soon, a war of words ensued between him and the presiding officer, amid which he allegedly pulled the EVM from the table, as a result of which it fell and broke, officials said.

Khurda Superintendent of Police (SP) Avinash Kumar said the MLA was arrested on the basis of a complaint lodged by the presiding officer.

A court later sent him to judicial custody and at present, he is lodged at the Khurda jail, officials said. Besides the Representation of People's Act, Jagadev was booked under Sections 452, 448, 294, 254 and a host of others under IPC provisions, the SP said. In his com-

plaint, the presiding officer alleged that the MLA created a disturbance at the booth, obstructed the voting process and abused the polling personnel, Kumar said.

"We have requested the District Election Officer (DEO) to check the CCTV footage of the incident," he said, adding that an investigation is underway.

A BJP leader claimed that the allegations against Jagadev were politically motivated.

"The presiding officer misbehaved with several voters and did the same with the MLA," he alleged.

The state's ruling BJD also filed a complaint with the chief electoral officer (CEO), seeking stern action against Jagadev.

Govt asks telcos to block spoofed calls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 26: In a significant move, the government Sunday issued directions to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) for blocking incoming international spoofed calls.

It noted that together with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), the TSPs have devised a system to help identify and block incoming international spoofed calls from reaching any Indian telecom subscriber.



In a statement, the Ministry of Communications informed that, "Fraudsters are making international spoofed calls displaying Indian mobile numbers to Indian citizens and committing cyber-crime and financial frauds".

"These calls appear to be originating within India but being made by the cyber-criminals from abroad by manipulating the calling line identity (CLI)," it added.

The ministry said that these calls "have been misused in recent cases of fake digital arrests, FedEx scams, drugs/narcotics in courier, impersonation as Govt and police officials, disconnections of mobile numbers by DoT/TRAI officials, etc".

The DoT had previously asked the TSPs to block incoming international spoofed calls with Indian landline numbers.

"Now directions have been issued to the TSPs for blocking of such incoming international spoofed calls," the ministry said. To maintain the safety and security of the users, DoT has taken many initiatives including citizen-centric Sanchar Saathi portal to protect telecom users.

"Despite best efforts, there may still be some fraudsters who succeed through other means. For such calls, you can help everybody by reporting such suspected fraud communications at the Chakshu facility on Sanchar Saathi," the ministry said.

AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE

Ayush Min to sensitise insurance companies

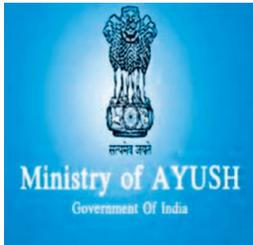
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 26: The Ministry of Ayush Sunday announced that it will launch a sensitisation programme for executive officials of insurance companies and owners of Ayush hospitals to promote accessible and affordable healthcare in the country.

The programme, which will take place May 27 at the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) in the national capital also aims to facilitate the empanelment of public and private Ayush hospitals for insurance coverage in India, the ministry said.

The programme will also discuss the regulatory framework and policy support needed to mainstream Ayush treatments in health insurance schemes and facilitate a dialogue between key stakeholders to address both challenges and opportunities.

Recently, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) ad-



vised all insurers to provide Ayush coverage in line with the increasing demand for Ayush treatments.

Coverage in the Ayush sector, standard treatment guidelines (STG) and ICD codes for the insurance sector, and penetration of Ayush in the insurance sector are the other key issues of discussion.

The programme will also discuss Ayush Hospital's achievements, and success stories of AIIA, the on-boarding of Ayush hospitals on the ROHINI platform, and the empanelment of Ayush Hospitals for insurance coverage, the ministry said.

We'll make 'reports' public if voted to power, says BJP



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 26: Senior state BJP leader KV Singh Deo Sunday said his party would make public the reports of 24 commissions of inquiry formed in the last 25 years after it forms government in the state, June 4. Speaking to media persons here, the former state BJP president expressed confidence that the BJP is heading for winning a majority of seats in this election. The party would fulfil all the

promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during campaigning in Odisha. Alleging that the BJD had suppressed the reports of 24 commissions of inquiry during its last 24-year of continuous rule, Deo said the state government had not revealed the reports, nor acted upon it. "But BJP would make those public once it comes to power," he added. "As promised by the Prime Minister, our government will

open Ratna Bhandar (strong room) of Jagannath temple in Puri and reveal its contents within three months of formation of the government," he said. Deo further said the BJP would expose all the scams during the BJD rule. It would take action on the mining scam and ensure punishment to those found guilty. "In ponzi scam also, the BJP government will take steps to return the money to the duped investors. Besides, it will expose ₹300 crore corpus fund announced by the BJD to return money to the investors," he further said. In addition to it, probe will also be ordered into various other scams like Awas yojana, water and other issues, and steps would be taken to solve various problems of the people, Deo added.



VIGILANT: Armed police personnel guard EVM strongroom in Puri, Sunday

OP PHOTO

KISS students excel in Class X Board exams

INSTITUTE ACHIEVES ALMOST 100% RESULTS FOR OVER 17 YEARS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 26: Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) has secured a 100 per cent result in the 10th Board Examination conducted by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha, the results of which were declared Sunday. Congratulating the students



and teachers, KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta, said that the continued success of KISS students year after year has been possible only due to the continuous effort of teach-

ers and staff, and the sincere dedication of the students. The state average is around 96.7 per cent. For over 17 years, KISS has been achieving, almost 100 per cent results in the board

exams. As many as 2008 students appeared for the exam, the highest for any school in the State, out of which 40 per cent students secured above 60 per cent. The rest secured more than 50 per cent. Sagun Tudu topped among all, securing 90 per cent. Fifty students from the Saura, Bonda, and Paudi Bhuyan communities of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) performed well in the examination with good marks, while students from the neighbouring state of Jharkhand also excelled in the matric board examination.

ADVERTISEMENT DURING LS POLLS

SC to hear plea against Calcutta HC order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Monday a plea filed by the BJP challenging a Calcutta High Court order that had refused to interfere with a single-judge verdict restraining the party from issuing advertisements that are allegedly 'violative' of the Model Code of Conduct during the Lok Sabha polls.

According to the cause list of May 27 uploaded on the apex court website, a vacation bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and KV Viswanathan is scheduled to hear the plea.

On May 22, a division bench of the high court had said it was not inclined to entertain the appeal against the interim order passed by the single-judge bench.

The single-judge bench May 20 had restrained the BJP from publishing advertisements that violated the MCC until June 4, the day the Lok Sabha poll results are scheduled to be declared. The court had also restrained the saffron party from publishing the advertisements mentioned by the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal, in its petition claiming unverified allegations against it and its workers.

The high court's division bench had said that the BJP can approach the single judge for a review or for modifications or a recall of the order.

The BJP had moved the intra-court appeal before the division bench, claiming that the single-judge bench had passed the order



without giving it any hearing. In its petition filed in the apex court, the BJP has said the division bench of the high court ought to have considered that the party was not heard and an ex-parte mandatory injunction was granted at an ad-interim stage by the single judge. "It is pertinent to highlight that such interim relief granted by the high court was beyond the prayer sought by the All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC/respondent no.1) which was limited only to the grant of interim order directing the Election Commission of India to take steps in accordance with law," it has said.

The plea has claimed that the single judge "erred by granting an interim injunction" based on the purported violation of the MCC, without taking into consideration that the issue is pending before the EC, which, by virtue of Article 324 read with Article 329 of the Constitution, has the authority to take appropriate action against any political party that violates the MCC.

It has pointed out that aggrieved by the publication of certain advertisements that were allegedly against the spirit of the MCC, the TMC had approached the EC.

The plea has said on the basis of the TMC's complaint, the EC issued a show-cause notice May 18, directing the BJP to file a reply by May 21.

"On May 20, 2024, the writ petition was listed before the high court. The single judge, despite observing that the EC is seized of the issue and a show-cause notice has been issued, proceeded to pass a blanket interim order, which is in the nature of a final order, thereby restraining the petitioner (BJP) from further continuing with the publication of the allegedly offending advertisements till June 4, 2024 or until further orders," it has said.

It has added that the division bench ought to have considered that the matter was heard and the order passed by the single judge in the absence of the BJP, which has a "significant impact on its ability to canvass during the election".

Parents donate organs of their 21-month-old baby

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 26: Parents of a 21-month-old male infant who was declared brain dead at the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital (IMS & SUM) here showed magnanimity by donating the child's organs to save two other lives.

The baby, born in the hospital in July 2022, had developed health issues subsequently and felt sick intermittently.

He had to be brought to the hospital several times and recovered after treatment, Debasmitha Rath of the hospital's Paediatrics department said.

He was again admitted to the hospital about a fortnight ago and was diagnosed with meningitis, Rath said. The baby was treated in the



ICU, but suffered septic shock and was declared brain dead Saturday. The parents, Gouri Shankar Panigrahi and Sharmistha Panigrahi, both city-based artistes, expressed their desire to donate their child's organs to help patients requiring transplant elsewhere.

SUM Hospital authorities passed on the information to State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO) which got in touch with the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO).

Later, it was decided that the liver of the infant would be flown to the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) at New Delhi for transplantation.

The kidneys were taken to a City hospital for another patient needing a transplant.

A team from the local AIIMS here harvested the liver, which travelled to New Delhi, for which the City police had prepared a green corridor for smooth passage to the Biju Patnaik International Airport. Acting Medical superintendent

of IMS & SUM Rachita Sarangi said, "This was the first time in Odisha that the organs of such a small baby had been harvested to help save lives elsewhere." A disconsolate Sharmistha, mother of the baby, said though she was heartbroken as her baby did not survive, she got consolation from the fact that the organs of her child would help another baby live on elsewhere.

This is the third time since 2022 that organs from brain-dead patients in the IMS & SUM Hospital have been harvested and taken to other hospitals for transplantation.

Organs of two brain-dead patients at the SUM Ultimate Medicare had also been flown out of the city within the last one year for persons awaiting transplantation.

Man assaulted by three youths



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 26: A 32-year-old man sustained grievous injuries following a violent attack by three miscreants under the Capital police station limits, late Saturday night.

In a complaint, the victim's father, Suman Kothi alleged that three youths, who were in an inebriated state, assaulted his son Tarini Kothi, as he called them out for selling and distributing country-made liquor in the area. Tarini sustained deep injuries in neck and abdomen and was rushed to Capital hospital for immediate treatment, said a cop at the Capital police station.

The cop, meanwhile, added that a probe has been launched and the culprits would be arrested soon. It has come to notice that the miscreants had been booked in the past for various criminal activities.

Healing secrets: Animals self-medicate with plants

A REMARKABLE BODY OF ACCOUNTS FROM ANCIENT TO MEDIEVAL TIMES DESCRIBES SELF-MEDICATION BY MANY DIFFERENT ANIMALS. THE ANIMALS USED PLANTS TO TREAT ILLNESS, REPEL PARASITES, NEUTRALISE POISONS AND HEAL WOUNDS

When a wild orangutan in Sumatra recently suffered a facial wound, apparently after fighting with another male, he did something that caught the attention of the scientists observing him. The animal chewed the leaves of a liana vine – a plant not normally eaten by apes. Over several days, the orangutan carefully applied the juice to its wound, and then covered it with a paste of chewed-up liana. The wound healed with only a faint scar. The tropical plant he selected has antibacterial and antioxidant properties and is known to alleviate pain, fever, bleeding and inflammation. The striking story was picked

up by media worldwide. In interviews and in their research paper, the scientists stated that this is "the first systematically documented case of active wound treatment by a wild animal" with a biologically active plant. The discovery will "provide new insights into the origins of human wound care." Some of the earliest written examples of animal self-medication appear in Aristotle's "History of Animals" from the fourth century BCE, such as the well-known habit of dogs to eat grass when ill, probably for purging and deworming. Aristotle also noted that after hibernation, bears seek wild garlic as their first food. It is



rich in vitamin C, iron and magnesium, healthful nutrients after a long winter's nap. The Latin name reflects this folk belief: Allium ursinum translates to "bear lily," and the common name in many other languages refers to bears.

Stags use dittany to treat arrow wounds as the plant has anti-septic, anti-inflammatory and coagulating properties.

Deer also knew an antidote for toxic plants: wild artichokes. The leaves relieve nausea and stomach cramps and protect the

liver. To cure themselves of spider bites, deer ate crabs washed up on the beach, and sick goats did the same. Notably, crab shells contain chitosan, which boosts the immune system.

When elephants accidentally swallowed chameleons hidden on green foliage, they ate olive leaves, a natural antibiotic to combat salmonella harbored by lizards. Ravens eat chameleons, but then ingest bay leaves to counter the lizards' toxicity. Antibacterial bay leaves relieve diarrhoea and gastrointestinal

distress. Blackbirds, partridges, jays and pigeons also eat bay leaves for digestive problems.

Weasels were said to roll in the evergreen plant rue to counter wounds and snakebites. Though the plant's medical value is unclear the dried plant is included in many traditional folk medicines. Swallows collect celandine to make a poultice for their chicks' eyes. Snakes emerging from hibernation rub their eyes on fennel. Fennel bulbs contain compounds that promote tissue repair and immunity.

According to the naturalist Aelian, who lived in the third century BCE, the Egyptians traced much of their medical knowledge to the wisdom of animals.

The study of animals' remedies continued in the medieval times. An example from the 12th-century English compendium of animal lore, the Aberdeen Bestiary, tells of bears coating sores with mullein. Folk medicine prescribes this flowering plant to soothe pain and heal burns

and wounds, thanks to its anti-inflammatory chemicals.

Animal self-medication has become a rapidly growing scientific discipline. Observers report observations of animals, from birds and rats to porcupines and chimpanzees, deliberately employing an impressive repertoire of medicinal substances. One surprising observation is that finches and sparrows collect cigarette butts. The nicotine kills mites in bird nests. Some veterinarians even allow ailing dogs, horses and other domestic animals to choose their own prescriptions by sniffing various botanical compounds.

Mysteries remain. No one knows how animals sense which plants cure sickness, heal wounds, repel parasites or otherwise promote health. Are they intentionally responding to particular health crises? And how is their knowledge transmitted? What we do know is that we humans have been learning healing secrets by watching animals self-medicate for millennia.

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Kendu leaf pluckers allege disparity in bonus payment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 26: Kendu leaf pluckers in Bolangir district have alleged disparity in payment of bonus, a report said.

They are also allegedly not provided with umbrellas to protect themselves from sun and rain, as well as slippers for protection against injuries and infections.

People in several villages of Bolangir district earn their livelihood by plucking kendu leaves from forests in the vicinity of their villages. After plucking the leaves, they tie them up in bundles and submit those at depots.

However, this year they are faced with the twin problems of bush cutting (pruning of the kendu tree) and leaf plucking. It is feared that income from kendu leaf might drop this year since the bushes have not been pruned properly.

Meanwhile, kendu leaf pluckers have expressed their resentment over various other problems plaguing them.

Earlier, personnel from the Kendu Leaf Division used to distribute umbrellas and slippers to the pluckers. However, the government agency has now allegedly stopped distributing the essentials.

Similarly, a section of the kendu leaf pluckers have expressed their dissatisfaction over the distribution of bonus by the state government. They alleged that they are not being given additional bonuses for plucking extra leaves, but rather paid on par with those plucking lesser quantity of leaves.

Same is the case with kendu leaf checkers and Munshis who too have aired their resentment over lack of any special assistance from the state government. Officials informed that at present, kendu leaf pluckers are paid ₹1.60 per bundle, with each containing 20 to 22 leaves. These bundles are then tied into larger bundles of 100.

After receiving the bundles, the officials keep record of quantity of kendu leaves collected by each of the pluckers by making entry into their collection cards. The quantity mentioned in the card helps them in receiving the correct payment. The state government is now paying the wages of the pluckers through their respective bank accounts.

Though the leaf pluckers have welcomed the direct credit of wages to their bank accounts, they have expressed their disappointment over disparity in payment of bonus and supply of assistance like umbrellas and slippers.

They alleged that they collect the leaves by risking their lives under scorching sun and blistering heatwaves. They said they leave home at daybreak to pluck kendu leaves and return in the evening.

Currently, Bolangir district is reeling under intense heatwaves, and it has become impossible to step out of home after 9 am. Given the situation, the leaf pluckers have demanded immediate provision of umbrellas and slippers. They have also sought the intervention of the state government and concerned authorities at the earliest to fulfill their demands.



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Baby turtles crawl into sea at Gahirmatha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, May 26: Lakhs of baby turtles have broken out of their eggshells and crawled towards the seawaters of the Gahirmatha coast in Odisha's Kendrapara district, marking the culmination of the annual sojourn of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles.

The whole of Nasi-2 Island is teeming with baby turtles and wildlife officials of Bhitarkanika National Park stationed at these nesting grounds were sole witness to this unique natural heritage involving the birth of babies sans mother, a Forest official said.

Sharing small visuals of the baby turtles on X, Odisha's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Wildlife, Susanta



Nanda said, "The sunrise began with new eyes. Hatchlings on their journey today to the sea from the mass nesting sites of Olive Ridley at Gahirmatha Sanctuary of the coast of Odisha."

The annual sojourn of Olive Ridley sea turtles for mass nesting otherwise called as 'arribada' had come to an end at Gahirmatha marine sanctuary in Kendrapara district with over 3 lakh female turning up at the

beach turtles to lay eggs from April 3.

The emergence of hatchlings would last for at least for seven to ten days. The number of babies would swell considerably in the coming days, said a Forest official of the Rajnagar Mangrove (Wildlife) Division.

Tourists and researchers were denied entry to savour the unique natural heritage keeping in view the fact that the unmanned island is located in close vicinity of

Wheeler's island defence test range centre, a prohibited territory.

The baby turtles broke out of the shackles of eggshells and wandered aimlessly around the sandy beach for nearly an hour before making their way to swirling seawater, said the Forest official.

It's a rare visual treat as the delicate babies with mothers nowhere in sight generate hissing noise thus creating a soothing cacophony. Later, they made a beeline towards the sea.

After the eggs are incubated under natural process, the hatchlings come out after 45-55 days' hiatus. The phenomenon of babies' emergence from the nests is a unique proposition in itself as babies grow sans mother.

Pregnant woman dies due to bad road conditions

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, May 26: Delay in arrival of an ambulance due to bad road conditions led to the death of a pregnant woman Saturday night. The deceased has been identified as Sabita Mallik, wife of Pradip Mallik a resident of Kanapaju village under Kalasakhaman panchayat and Daspalla block in Nayagarh district.



Family members of Sabita informed that she started experiencing labour pain Saturday night. Accordingly an ambulance was called.

However, even though the ambulance arrived at the village, it could not reach Sabita's house due to slushy road conditions. Sabita's family members then took her on a sling to the ambulance. However, valuable time was lost in the process and Sabita started bleeding.

On the way to the Daspalla Health Centre, Sabita gave birth inside the ambulance. However, Sabita continued to bleed profusely.

The mother and the newborn son were admitted to Daspalla Health Centre.

However, doctors there failed to stop Sabita's bleeding and she breathed her last. Doctors however stated that newborn is fine and in healthy condition.

Man killed, 8 injured in Baripada road mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, May 26: A man was killed Sunday while eight others sustained critical injuries after a van they were travelling in was hit by a goods truck from the rear on National Highway-18 near Asanjoda under Kuliana police limits in Mayurbhanj district, Sunday.

On being informed, police and fire personnel rushed the injured persons in an ambulance to Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College and Hospital (PRMMCH) in Baripada.

Police stated later in the day that they are yet to ascertain the identity of the deceased person.

However, they added that injured are from localities under Kuliana and Bangiriposhi police limits. As the conditions of all the injured were quite critical they were shifted later in the day to the SCB Medical



The driver stopped the vehicle on the side of the road for some passengers to get down. However, at that time a speeding truck rammed into the van

College and Hospital in Cuttack. The mishap occurred when the van carrying passengers was on its way to Baripada from Kuchel.

The driver stopped the vehicle on the side of the road for some passengers to get down. However, at that time a speeding truck rammed into the van. The impact was so violent that the van completely overturned, trapping all the passengers under it.

35 gharial hatchlings born in Satkosia gorge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, May 26: In a good news for animal lovers, a female gharial near Baladamada in Satkosia gorge gave birth to 35 hatchlings last Thursday, sources said Sunday.

After a long 40-year interval, this marks the fourth consecutive successful natural hatching in this habitat. It is noted that a female gharial laid eggs near Baladamada in the Satkosia Gorge last March. The eggs were expected to hatch after a month, but the extreme heat caused a delay in hatching, causing concern for the wildlife department. To support the gharial breed-

ing, fishing and boating activities in the core areas were strictly prohibited. Despite the delay, the birth of 35 hatchlings brought joy to the Satkosia wildlife staff. The Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary, under the Mahanadi Wildlife Division and Angul Forest Division, established a gharial conservation project at Tikarpada in 1975 with the primary aim of increasing the gharial population in the Mahanadi River.

A research centre and a conservation centre for gharials were also established at Tikarpada for this purpose. However, despite various efforts, the gharial population did not in-



crease significantly in Satkosia, sparking concerns among the experts.

In 2020, several male and female gharials were released into the gorge for artificial breeding, and their activities were closely monitored. In 2022, for the first time, a female gharial near

Baladamada in Satkosia gave birth to 28 hatchlings.

In May 2022, another female gharial was spotted playing with 30 hatchlings, as per a release by the wildlife department. As many as 35 gharial hatchlings were born again in May 2023. The continuous birth of gharials for four consecutive periods has spread cheers in Satkosia. The consistent birth of gharials indicates success in the breeding efforts of gharials in Satkosia.

May has become a special month for Satkosia with the birth of gharial hatchlings in every May. The wildlife department is currently laying stress on the protection of these hatchlings.

Sambalpur mason's daughter tops in dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 26: Suma Khatun from Sunapalli village, under Sambalpur municipality, whose father works as a mason, has topped in Sambalpur district in the matriculation examinations results of which was announced, Sunday.

Suma is a shining example of how a person can reach the pinnacle of success with hard work and willpower on the face of adversity. While the successful student's father Mirazul Haque



is a mason, mother Aisha Bibi adds to the family income by stitching cloths.

Suma is the second daughter of her parents, and studied at the Balibandha Government Girls

High School in Sakshipada.

She has secured a total of 556 marks (92.66 per cent) in the matric exams, good enough to bag the coveted first position in the district. Suma said she wants to become a teacher in future. For that, she plans to do her bachelor's degree in Education.

She credits her parents, school teachers and tutor 'Bijay Sir' for the success. She said she used to study for 13-14 hours a day during her preparations for the Board examination.

Youth held for raping 4-yr-old

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kotpad, May 26: Police arrested Sunday a youth on charges of raping a four-year old at Choramula village under Kusumi panchayat and Kotpad police limits in Koraput district. The accused was identified as Narsingh Bhumia, a resident of the same village. A medical examination was conducted on the accused and the victim before producing the former in court. The incident has sparked tension in the village.

The gruesome incident occurred Friday, when the girl was playing in front of her house while her mother was working in the backyard. The accused allegedly carried the minor to desolate place and raped her. However, when Bhumia was returning with the victim, her mother found the two of them.



On being questioned, Bhumia stated that he had taken the girl for an ice-cream. He left the girl at her home and went away. However, when the victim fell sick and complained of excruciating pain in her private parts, her mother guessed something amiss. The victim also managed to narrate to her mother the ordeal she had been through.

The woman then lodged a complaint against Bhumia at the Kotpad police station. In her complaint, she mentioned that Bhumia picked her daughter from house and raped her behind a school building in the village. Police detained Bhumia who confessed to the crime during interrogation following which he was arrested.

RSS demands early elections for RSP's workers' union

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 26: The Rourkela Shramik Sangha (RSS) has asked the deputy labour commissioner to conduct elections to form the workers' union in Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) as soon as possible. The general secretary of the RSS, Prasant Behera had written a letter to the Labour Commissioner's Office in Bhubaneswar, March 11 to conduct elections as soon as possible and had submitted a copy of it to the local Labour Commissioner's office here. The term of the RSS-run union ended March 12 and since then there is no workers' union in the RSP.

Behera reiterated Sunday the claims of the RSS to conduct the elections to the various posts as soon as possible. He came down heavily on the BMS-affiliated Rourkela Ispat Karkhana Karmachari Sangh (RIKKS) and its general secretary Himansu



Bal for the delay in elections." They have filed a case at the Orissa High Court for holding the elections in RSP. The next hearing for the matter is July 12. By filing a case, they have delayed the process. We are ready to fight the elections even tomorrow," asserted Behera.

The RSS general secretary stated that a lot has been done for the RSP employees in the last couple of years. "We have signed an MoU with SAIL for a new pay scale for the workers. Also, the fringe benefits have been increased to 26.5 per cent. Night shift and HR allowances

have substantially increased during our tenure," Behera stated.

Behera pointed out that during the tenure of the RSS health benefits for the workers have improved substantially. "Various pathological tests can now be done at the first-aid centre within

the RSP premises. Wellness allowances are being provided to employees of various departments like HMS-2, Coke Oven and Blast Furnaces. The amount for organ transplantation has been increased to ₹25 lakh from the earlier available ₹10 lakh," he said. "The rules for getting a loan from the provident fund have been simplified. Also a crèche has been set up for kids of female employees," added Behera.

The senior RSS official also pointed out that qualitative enhancement has come in the maintenance of roads, houses, drainage and other services. "Apart from modernising the community centres in various localities, the one at Sector-18 has been converted into a beautiful marriage hall. House allotment rules have also been changed, making it easy for employees to get quarters," Behera informed.

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Registration is compulsory.
The registration time will be from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm.
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FOCUS ELECTORAL REFORMS

LOST OPPORTUNITY



The Supreme Court's September 2018 judgment leaves a lot to be desired, keeping in view the high moral ground it has taken in the past to uphold the right of voters to know the criminal antecedents of the contestants

court surmises adding "as the society has a legitimate expectation to be governed by proper constitutional governance."

The recommendations, though welcome, involve serious roadblocks. Parliament, regardless of who is in power, has always been reluctant to legislate on the issue. The recommendation regarding publicization of the criminal background of the candidates by the political parties sounds counterintuitive. Why would they publicize actively anything that goes against their interests? Opponents of the proposal contend that electoral candidates are deemed "innocent until proven guilty". One wonders what they have to say about 4.34 lakh undertrials, not yet convicted and hence innocent who are currently in jail as per NCRB, which is 75.8% of total prisoners. Four fundamental rights stand suspended for these undertrials- liberty, freedom of movement, freedom to pursue one's occupation of choice, and right to dignity. If the rights of these undertrials can be suspended within the ambit of law, what is the sanctity of the candidate's right to contest elections, which is a statutory and not a fundamental right?

The verdict in September 2018 was a missed opportunity for the Supreme Court, especially when seen in the light of the nation's quest for free, fair, and clean elections. When the Parliament is unwilling to do the job of cleansing politics from the curse of criminality, the judiciary must step in on half of the citizens. Free and fair election as a basic structure of the Constitution can only be achieved by the Supreme Court being proactive instead of nibbling around the edges.

The writer teaches Constitutional Law

On 25th September 2018, the Supreme Court delivered a judgment on petitions asking it to bar politicians facing heinous crime charges like rape, murder, and kidnapping from contesting elections. A five-bench led by CJI Dipak Misra said the court cannot play the role of the Parliament, which under Article 102(f) can frame any law to disqualify a member. Besides Art 102(a) to (d) enumerate various contingencies that can disqualify a person from being a member of the Parliament. Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 bans convicted politicians from contesting polls. But those facing trial, no matter how serious the charges are, are free to contest. The past elections have seen an increasing number of legislators with criminal backgrounds - 124 in 2004, 162 in 2009, 182 in 2014, and 229 in 2019. The judgment leaves a lot to be desired, keeping in view the high moral ground it has taken in the past to uphold the right of voters to know the criminal antecedents of the contestants.

In the UOI vs ADR (2002) case, the Supreme Court held that a voter has a right to know the assets, educational, and criminal background of candidates running for office. This right is derived from Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution. It asserted its verdict by striking down Section 33B of the RPOP act which tried to ringfence candidates to disclose such information. Further in Krishnamurthy Vs Shivkumar (2015) case, the court said as the candidate himself would know the pending cases against him where charges have been framed, nondisclosure of the same during filing for the nomination would amount to undue influence and therefore, the election is to be declared null and void

by the election tribunal under Section 100(1) (b) of the 1951 Act. In February 2024, the court unanimously struck down the Electoral Bond scheme as it violated voters' right to information enshrined in Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution. The right to informed voting has become an inalienable part of the right to freedom of speech and expression.

The September 2018 judgment looked into the Manoj Narula case which examined the legality of persons charged with offences involving moral turpitudes to be appointed ministers. The court felt that in the absence of any constitutional prohibition or statutory embargo such disqualification cannot be read into Article 75(1) which authorizes the PM to advise the President regarding his council of ministers. TS Krishnamurthy, the former CEC had suggested in 1998 that the law should be amended to provide that any person for five years or more should be disqualified from contesting elections even when trial is pending, provided charges have been framed by a competent court.

Such a step would go a long way in cleansing the political establishment from the influence of criminal elements and protecting the sanctity of the legislative houses.

The Law Commission while agreeing with the above content had suggested safeguards like offences that have a maximum punishment of five years or above and charges filed up to one year before the scrutiny of nominations for an election. These recommendations never saw the light of the day in the form of law. The 2018 order did some window dressing by suggesting that each candidate shall state in bold letters about criminal cases pending against the candidate, and inform the party of these details. The party in turn will put up the information in their website and circulate the information in a widely circulated local newspaper. While giving these homilies the court has noted that "a time has come that the Parliament must make law to ensure that persons facing serious criminal cases do not enter into the political stream." "The nation eagerly awaits such legislation", the



Satya Narayan Misra

FREE AND FAIR ELECTION AS A BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE CONSTITUTION CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY THE SUPREME COURT BEING PROACTIVE INSTEAD OF NIBBLING AROUND THE EDGES

Hong Kong Way

Ominous signals have started emanating from Taiwan hours after the new President Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took charge. He had won the elections with the pledge to defend Taiwan against China's aggrandisement, while cautiously following the policy of maintaining status quo which means he would not openly work for ending Chinese control. Taking advantage of DPP's minority position in the legislature, two Opposition parties - Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People's Party (TPP) - known for their pro-Chinese politics, have closed ranks to get a controversial legislation passed that is feared to make the country go Hong Kong way where China has taken firm control. Thousands of people of Taiwan, including its youth, demonstrated around the Taiwanese legislature recently in protest against the discussion on the proposed legislation that began at 9 a.m. and ended shortly after midnight.

The demonstration was organized by over 40 groups, many of which were key players during the 2014 Sunflower Movement involving a month-long occupation of the Legislative Yuan, as Taiwan's legislature is known, in protest against a free trade agreement with China that the then-ruling KMT hoped to pass. In many ways, the demonstration was a replay of the Sunflower Movement as there is considerable public outrage over actions by the KMT. The trigger this time is the amendments to the law moved by the KMT and its political ally, the TPP, that would allow legislators to summon private individuals or government officials to face questioning. Defiance could lead to criminal charges of "contempt of the legislature," with a penalty of up to three years in jail. What has shaken the people is the provision that those being questioned would be required to give answers even if they involved state secrets, such as details of diplomatic agreements or arms deals or trade secrets. Moreover, they would not be allowed to ask counter questions during such interrogations. Any attempt to do so would entail punishment by a fine of 200,000 Taiwanese dollars (around US \$ 6,200).

The measures are being perceived by civil society groups to be akin to national security legislation passed by Hong Kong after 2019. Critics fear the amendments would be used by the KMT and TPP to take on political opponents or force the disclosure of confidential information compromising national security. Several recent controversies have involved KMT legislators disclosing such information. For example, Ma Wen-chun, appointed to co-chair the legislature's defence committee by the KMT, has been accused of leaking details of Taiwan's domestic submarine programme to the Chinese and South Korean governments.

The KMT's move for new powers has gained momentum after previous attempts by the party to revive the controversial Special Investigation Division (SID) of the Ministry of Justice and to place the SID under the direct control of the legislature rather than law enforcement. The SID is controversial because of its use under past KMT administrations to target political opponents, as in the wiretapping of KMT majority speaker Wang Jinpyng at a time when he was distancing himself from then-President Ma Ying-jeou. The SID was dissolved by Tsai Ing-wen when she took office.

The KMT's attempt to increase the powers of the legislature is being construed as a ploy to enable the legislature to have power over the executive branch of government. For critics, this is another way to grab power by the KMT as it had done in the past.

The Sunflower Movement is considered one of the largest social movements in Taiwanese history, which peaked with about 500,000 taking to the streets of Taipei on March 30, 2014. Many of the participants in the demonstration this time around were connected to the movement.

The danger that the development poses to Taiwan and the rest of the world is that the legislative manoeuvring sets the stage for stormy and contentious next four years, with the KMT and TPP capitalizing on their advantage in the legislature to try and pass measures crippling Lai's administration. The new President has sensed it and adopted a conciliatory tone vis-a-vis China asking the latter to cooperate with him for mutual interest. In the same breath he has made it clear to China that he would continue his predecessor's policy of working closely with the US to ward off any Chinese attempt to take the country over by force. With this backdrop, any adventurism by China would prove disastrous for peace, stability and economy of the region and the rest of the world.

WISDOM CORNER

- Life's too short to deal with other people's insecurities. **ANTHONY HOPKINS**
- There's no good way to waste your time. Wasting time is just wasting time. **HELEN MIRREN**
- I have never really been confident about my career at any stage. **AMITABH BACHCHAN**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1291:** Crusader rule in the Holy Land came to an end as the Mamluks took the city of Acre, the last stronghold of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.
- 1804:** Napoleon proclaimed the establishment of the French Empire.
- 1934:** The Dionne quintuplets, the first set of documented quintuplets to survive, were born near Callander, Ontario, Canada, to Oliva and Elzire Dionne.
- 1937:** The German automaker Volkswagen was founded to mass-produce a low-priced "people's car"; the company was originally operated by a Nazi organization.
- 1999:** After some two decades of restoration work, Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper was reopened to public view in Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan.

LOL

An amazing talking dog

A man and his dog walk into a bar. The man proclaims, "I'll bet you a round of drinks that my dog can talk." Bartender: "Yeah! Sure...go ahead." Man: "What covers a house?" Dog: "Roof!" Man: "How does sandpaper feel?" Dog: "Rough!" Man: "Who was the greatest ball player of all time?"



Dog: "Ruth!" Man: "Pay up. I told you he could talk." The bartender, annoyed at this point, throws both of them out the door. Sitting on the sidewalk, the dog looks at the guy and says, "or is the greatest player Mantle?"

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

RBI bonanza cuts deficit, boom likely



Shivaji Sarkar

THE RECORD DIVIDEND IS EXPECTED TO HELP THE GOVERNMENT BRING DOWN ITS FISCAL DEFICIT

A staggering windfall has hit the Indian treasury as the Reserve Bank of India delivers its largest-ever dividend of ₹2.11 lakh crore. This colossal sum, a whopping 141 percent surge from last year's ₹87,416 crore, has not only strengthened government finances but also set the stock market abuzz with wild speculation.

Quite a few days back the bond market has been buzzing with certain movements. Soon after the dividend announcements government bonds slipped below 7 per cent suggesting that the investors are at quick money in the stock market and government borrowings no more remains lucrative.

A pertinent question being asked is what the government would do with this bonanza as the interim budget has taken care of the most of the expenses.

The boom has enthused share market as foreign portfolio investors, withdrew a net amount of ₹28,200 crore in equities in 2024 so far reportedly on a keenly-contested election.

Some of the domestic firms that got a boost are no surprises as of and on they were having profits. The record dividend is expected to help the government bring down its fiscal deficit to 5 per cent of GDP from the budgeted 5.1 per cent.

The government is on spending spree of ₹11 lakh crore on infrastructure. The likelihood of ramping up Centre's revenue expenditure growth remains limited. Post-election, there would be less pressure to fund subsidies and revenue expenditures.

There are also apprehensions that if the extra money that would reflect in the July budget is utilised to spend more it could add to inflation. Already inflationary pressure remains high despite smallslide in consumer index recently. The government might resort to more crash measures. The RBI has repeatedly said that it was under pressure to maintain the price line, but the constant rise has prevented it from doing a lot many things. As the level of prices is very high it should have reined in with suitable rise in interest rates. That has not happened.

The RBI funding at this level is likely to create additional liquidity. At the time of demonetisation, in 2016, around ₹15 lakh crore of currency notes were in circulation. Now, according to RBI, the currency in circulation has more than doubled to ₹35.15 lakh crore in end March 2024. It denotes that higher level of money circulation is at least one of the reasons for the rising of prices. In addition, there is circulation of digital or UPI money.

This also inflates the market though so far actual demand has not risen much and manufacturing has shown marginal increase.

India's industrial production growth slowed marginally to 4.9 per cent month-on-month in March 2024, mainly due to poor show by the mining sector, according to official data. The factory output growth, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), was 5.6 per cent in February 2024. It means the kind of actual money is not being generated suppressing the job market. In a situation like this how does RBI generate such surplus, that even on May 20, two days before the announcement of the windfall, suggested the dividend would not be that high.

The RBI attributes the windfall to a confluence of factors including a surge in foreign exchange reserves, loans to commercial banks and the government's proactive approach in managing contingencies.

Potential sources of higher profits for the RBI include gross profit sale of foreign exchange reserves and higher interest income in the US market. One of its methods was to buy dollars at ₹78 and sell at ₹83. With gross sales exceeding \$150 billion in 2023-24, a significant portion of

the dividend can be explained by these transactions, which were primarily carried out to generate the payout amount. Somewhere the citizens paid the difference. It is noted that the RBI could have transferred an additional ₹35,000 crore in dividends if it had not increased the contingency buffer around 6 per cent.

However, a former chairman of the 5th West Bengal State Finance Commission, Abhirup Sarkar, and a former professor at the Indian Statistical Institute, expresses reservations. He says that the payment might not be from its income and the central bank could have used its reserves to pay the hefty dividend. He cautioned against the inflationary impact of injecting liquidity into the market, foreseeing a decline in real interest rates that could adversely affect retirees and individuals reliant on interest income.

The timing of announcement amid the elections also has raised some questions. The bond markets would like the government to reduce its deficits. On the contrary, the equities prefer government increase expenses. Both have different purposes. But the country wants that the banks, which have gone through phases of turmoil, consolidate and add to the growth.

Lessons from fire mishaps

Sir, Two horrific fire accidents—one in Delhi and the other in Rajkot—causing the deaths of so many, including new born infants - are truly shocking and heart wrenching. Now, each and every time an incident like that happens, we make a big noise and cry. But as the days roll on, we are back to square one—we completely forget and wake up when another tragedy occurs. Lack of preparedness, readiness to tackle fire accidents—be it due to short circuits or any other sort—and lack of awareness on what to do in case of such incidents make us victims to infernos. These incidents pose a big question - when are we really going to learn our lessons? Be it hospitals or hotels, movie halls or malls, people may not have the slightest idea about the escape routes. The staff of the concerned establishments should be prepared to rescue or at least guide the guests to safety. Schools and colleges should include fire disaster management lessons in their physical education curricula so that we can groom citizens who can face such emergencies boldly, wisely, and bravely, and even help the weak and those who are very young.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

China's power projection

Sir, Apropos, 'China continues to intimidate Taiwan,' Orissa Post, May 25. China's military exercises around Taiwan are about power projection. Those with stakes in the region must watch the space. The Chinese moves may not be merely about intimidation. President Xi Jinping has repeated on numerous occasions that the'reunification' of China and Taiwan is on his agenda. He has also refused to rule out the use of force. Even if such a maximalist position is political rhetoric, meant as much for domestic audiences as Taipei and Western capitals, it does not bode well. Also, military drills and Chinese navy and coast guard patrols do not just project power; they try to assert it. This has caused much alarm in littoral states, many of which have deep economic ties with the aggressor. It is in this context of intimidation and expansion that the drills are taking place. Great and middle powers with stakes in the region must keep a close watch.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

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

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Tejashwi slams PM for 'Mujra' remarks



Tejashwi Yadav said that PM Modi came to Bihar and said baseless, factless and false things publicly Saturday where he once again tried to "confuse everyone" but was unsuccessful in his attempt

hearted country. To be honest, we are worried about you," said Tejashwi Yadav, in a letter addressed to PM Modi.

On the caste census, the Bihar LoP said that PM Modi must remember that leaders of all political parties of Bihar met him in August 2021 and demanded the caste census.

"Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was also in favour of caste census. The proposal for caste census was passed unanimously in the Bihar Legislative Assembly on my initiative. We all demanded a caste census but PM Modi rejected it," Tejashwi Yadav wrote.

He said that as soon as the JD-U and RJD government came to power in Bihar, it conducted a caste-based survey at the state's own expense and then in light of that survey, increased the scope of the reservation to 75 per cent.

"We kept you (PM Modi) requesting, again and again, to include it in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution but he always had an anti-backward and anti-Dalit mentality," Tejashwi Yadav wrote.

He said that the Prime Minister did not consider Bihar's important requests, which had a Bahujan voice in its favour.

"We had also appealed to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the Eastern

Regional Council meeting held in Patna December 10, 2023," he said.

On reservation, Tejashwi Yadav wrote, that PM Modi has found a unique way to end Babasaheb's reservation which is available for government jobs under Section 15 and Section 16 of the Constitution.

"If you end government jobs in railways, army and other departments then what will be the concept of reservation? Shockingly, this serious concern is not in your priorities. We have urged you (PM Modi) many times in Parliament to make arrangements for reservation in the private sector so that a wide Bahujan population, Dalit community and other deprived groups get their due constitutional rights," he said.

On reservation of Gujarati Muslims, Tejashwi Yadav said that all Dalits, extremely backward and tribal people know that BJP and PM Modi are staunch ideological enemies of Babasaheb, Birsa Munda, Kanshiram, Ram Manohar Lohia and Mandal Commission.

"I am also attaching the list of Muslim castes under the OBC category in Gujarat. Perhaps you are not aware that 25 castes of the Muslim community also get reservations in Gujarat. You were the Chief Minister of Gujarat for more than 13 years. So, refrain from spreading confusion and politics of hatred in the people," he wrote.

He said that instead of fighting a democratic battle, PM Modi is threatening to send a 34-year-old youth (Tejashwi Yadav) to jail.

"Are you not tearing the Constitution into pieces by making such threats? Elections will come and go but do not harm the Constitution and the country's social structure anymore," Tejashwi Yadav wrote.



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addresses during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections in Patna, Bihar

Collegium system undemocratic: Kushwaha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karakat, May 26: Former Union minister Upendra Kushwaha Sunday expressed hope that upon return to power, the BJP-led NDA will make a fresh attempt at scrapping the "undemocratic" collegium system of appointment of judges in the higher judiciary.

"The collegium system has many flaws. It is undemocratic. It has shut the doors of judgeship in the higher judiciary on Dalits, OBCs and even the poor among the upper castes," claimed Kushwaha, who heads the Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM).

"If we look at the composition of the bench in the Supreme Court and the high courts, it is dominated by members of a few hundred families. A reason why the anomalous system has been criticised by no less than the current president and her predecessor," he added.

Kushwaha, who was the min-



ister of state for HRD in the first Narendra Modi government, recalled the National Judicial Appointments Commission Bill which was brought in 2014.

"For some reason, it was struck down by the Supreme Court," he lamented.

Lashing out at RJD president Lalu Prasad, the NDA partner questioned his "social justice credentials", claiming "he had been a Union minister and an important ally of the UPA for the entire period the Congress-led coalition in power. But never did he raise a voice against the

collegium system".

Referring to the corruption scandals against the RJD supremo, Kushwaha said "we cannot expect a principled stand on such issues from someone who keeps oscillating between jail and bail". "It was the NDA that dared to bite the bullet on the thorny issue of collegium system. And it is the NDA which will continue to make efforts in this direction," he said.

Notably, Kushwaha has been a votary of reservations in higher judiciary and, despite switching allies a number of times,

Addressing an election rally in Karakat Lok Sabha constituency from where he is in the fray, Kushwaha made the statement in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah

has not diluted his stand on the contentious issue.

The OBC leader also bristled at "rumours spread by detractors" that he had opposed the 10 per cent quota for Economically Weaker Sections introduced by the Modi government.

"I had supported the bill. If anybody can show any evidence that I had opposed it, I will retire from politics," he said, apparently wary of an upper-caste backlash in the elections.

CYCLONE REMAL

Met dept issues alert in Bihar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, May 26: Bihar Met department has issued an alert as cyclone Remal is expected to hit the coastal areas of West Bengal Sunday.

An official of the Met department said that several districts of Bihar will witness moderate to heavy storms after cyclone Remal enters West Bengal, which will bring some respite from the scorching heat in the state.

At present, cyclone Remal is passing through the central part of the Bay of Bengal. The Met department has predicted rains in Saharsa, Madhepura, Banka, Jamui, Khagaria, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Samastipur, Purnea, Araria, Supaul, Katihar, Kishanganj, Bhagalpur, Munger, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Darbhanga and Madhubani districts of Bihar.

"People in these districts should stay alert and cautious in the wake of cyclone Remal," the IMD said in a statement.

GOA ACCIDENT

ALL ACCUSED WILL BE PROSECUTED: SAWANT

AGENCIES

Panaji, May 26: Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant Sunday said that all the accused persons, including contractors, in the road accident that claimed four lives, will be prosecuted.

Four Bihar labourers were killed and four others injured after a bus rammmed into their hutments along the roadside at Verna Industrial estate in the coastal state Saturday night.

CM Sawant said: "The accident at Verna Industrial estate causing death and injuries is unfortunate. The procedure has been started to prosecute the driver of the bus who drove under the influence of alcohol, along with the contractor and subcontractors who accommodated the labourers dangerously in the huts at the spot. All accused are being charged for causing injuries and death. Government shall also blacklist the contractors and subcontractors. No one shall be spared."



Four labourers were killed and five others critically injured when a private bus rammmed into two roadside shanties at an industrial estate in South Goa district

The accident occurred at around 11.30 pm Saturday at the Verna Industrial Estate when the labourers, engaged in road construction work, were sleeping in the shanties

According to the Chief Minister, these labourers who were engaged in the work of pavement were provided accommodation along the roadside, which was dangerous and hence contractors would be blacklisted.

Superintendent of Police (South) Sunita Sawant told media persons that the accident occurred after a bus driver carrying workers of a private company lost control of the steering. "While negotiating to take a

turn, the driver rammmed the bus into hutments, where around eight labourers were sleeping. Four of them have died, while four are undergoing treatment at Sub District Hospital in Margao," CM Sawant said.

She said that these workers, all natives of Bihar, were engaged in construction work of pavement. Police said that the bus driver has also sustained injuries and is undergoing treatment. Police are further investigating the case.

Jeep ride to Dudhsagar waterfall barred in Goa

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, May 26: The adventurous journey of 14 km by Jeep to the Dudhsagar waterfall from the Bhagwan Mahavir National Park at Collem in South Goa will be closed from June 1 for the proliferation of wildlife during the monsoon season.

Every year, more than two lakh domestic and foreign tourists flock to this tourism circuit located in the Bhagwan Mahaveer National Park, which remains closed for taxi operations every



year during the monsoon.

The Deputy Conservator of Forests informed that the Dudhsagar waterfall tourism circuit will be closed for vehicle movement with effect from June 1 for the proliferation of wildlife and due to the advancement of monsoon in Goa.

The jeep ride to the waterfall is likely to commence in September or October.

Goa HSSC supplementary examination from today

AGENCIES

Panaji, May 26: The Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (GBSHSE) has released the dates for HSSC supplementary examination.

The Goa Board supplementary examination 2024 will start May 27 and will end June 7.

The Goa Board examination will be held in some selective exam centres.

These centres are North Goa, Mapusa Center at DMS PVC SM, Kushe Higher Secondary School, Assagao, Bardez Goa, South Goa, Margao and Center Carmel Higher Secondary School, Nuvem.

This year, a total of 17,987 students appeared for the Goa Board HSSC exams, of which 8,550 were male candidates and 9,437 were female students.

A total of 4,309 students were from the Arts stream, 5,320 from Commerce, 5,883 from Science and 2,475 students from the vocational stream.

The overall pass percentage is 85 per cent with males securing 81.6 per cent and females 88 per cent. Analysing the results stream then commerce is ahead with other streams by securing



This year, a total of 17,987 students appeared for the Goa Board HSSC exams, of which 8,550 were male candidates and 9,437 were female students

A total of 4,309 students were from the Arts stream, 5,320 from Commerce, 5,883 from Science and 2,475 students from the vocational stream

a pass percentage of 90.7 per cent, followed by arts (86.3%), science (82.4%) and vocational (76.4%). According to the criteria set by GBSHSE, the passing threshold for the Goa Board is 33 per cent. If a student scores below 33 per cent in any subject, they will be designated as 'Fail' in that specific subject.

Achieving 33 per cent earns students a Grade G. Below the passing threshold, no grade is assigned to students.

Bihar alcohol ban prevented violence cases: Lancet

In April 2016, the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act brought about a near complete halt on the manufacture, transport, sale, and consumption of alcohol throughout the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: Bihar's alcohol ban in 2016 prevented 24 lakh cases of daily and weekly consumption, and 21 lakh cases of intimate partner violence, according to new research published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia journal.

The ban is also estimated to have prevented 18 lakh men in the state from becoming overweight or obese, it said.

A team of researchers, including those from The International Food Policy

Research Institute, Poverty, Health and Nutrition Division, US, analysed data from national and district level health and household surveys.

"Strict alcohol regulation policies may yield significant population level health benefits for frequent drinkers and many victims of intimate partner violence," the authors wrote.

In April 2016, the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act brought about a near complete halt on the manufacture, transport, sale, and consumption of alcohol throughout the state.



The overnight launch and its strict enforcement made the ban an "attractive natural experiment to estimate the true causal impacts of a strict alcohol restriction policy on health and domestic violence outcomes," according to the authors. Data from the National Family Health Surveys-3, -4, and -5 were included in the analysis.

"Before the ban, males in Bihar increased their frequent

alcohol intake from 9.7 per cent to 15 per cent, while in neighbouring states, it increased from 7.2 per cent to 10.3 per cent.

"After the ban, these trends reversed, with at least weekly alcohol intake decreasing to 7.8 per cent in Bihar, while in neighbouring states it continued to increase to 10.4 per cent," the authors wrote. They also found evidence for reduced physical violence against women in

Bihar, "with a 4.6 percentage points decrease in emotional violence and a 3.6 percentage points decrease in sexual violence". On the aspect of the ban's impact on men's health, the authors' modelling estimated that cases of overweight men increased by four percentage points, and those of overweight or obese men decreased by 5.6 percentage points, compared to trends in the neighbouring states.

"We estimate that the ban prevented 2.4 million cases of frequent alcohol consumption, and 1.8 million cases of overweight/obesity among males, and 2.1 million cases of intimate partner violence compared to neighbouring states without a similar prohibition," the authors wrote.

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Wednesday, 29th May 2024; 6:30 pm. onwards.
at Hotel Radhika Regency, Bisra Road, Rourkela - 769 001, Odisha.
For registration, please contact: Ranjit Mallik, Mobile: 99370 88035.

Registration is compulsory.
The registration time will be from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm.
No walk-ins will be allowed.

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Waning Naxal fears boost turnout

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 26: One of the most important takeaways in this general election is the waning fear towards Naxals in the affected areas of Sundargarh district as people have stepped out in large numbers to participate in the world's largest democratic exercise.

“What happened in Sundargarh is almost similar to what happened at Baramula in J&K where voters wanted to participate in the democratic process this time in record numbers,” said a security personnel involved in combating the Naxal menace.

Some of the worst affected areas in the district also witnessed impressive voting percentage a report on which was published in OrissaPOST May 22. Earlier, areas like Bisra, Jareikela, Bhalulata and other nearby places used to witness voting percentage of 30-35 per cent, but this time these areas have recorded a turnout of over 60 per cent.

“We tried to ensure that the villagers of the areas come out to



**CPI (MAO) AC
BUDHRAM MUNDA,
S/O ASHIM MUNDA,
VILL.- HEMBRAM, CHARISUID,
PS.- ARKI, DISTT.- KHUNTI.**

vote in large numbers. And we found youths coming in record numbers. This is a very positive development,” said a CISF officer on duty.

The strategy by the Maoists to lure the young blood into their cadres is also failing as the youths have become conscious about their future.

“Youths, nowadays, have become aspirational and they have understood the futility of an almost ‘failed movement’. Now, they see a different world as all kinds of information is available on their fingertips, thanks

Declining strength of the cadres, regular setbacks to the movements through encounters and surrender of hardcore Maoists have prevented the youths from joining Naxal outfits.

to the smartphones. They are now aware that a better world exists for them, and they can do something better to fulfil their dreams,” explained a retired professor of sociology.

“For them the priorities have changed and a better life, which the movement assures, can be achieved otherwise,” he added.

Earlier, one Maoist poster would spread panic down the spine, but now that seems to be vanishing.

Besides, the declining strength of the cadres, regular setbacks to the movements through encounters in some other areas and surrender of hardcore Maoists are some of the factors that make youths indifferent to

join Naxal outfits.

“It is not the presence of the security forces for which the youths are not getting indoctrinated in Mao cadres. It is the regular setbacks in Chhattisgarh and decreasing effect of southern states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana that come into play,” said a veteran observer of Naxal movement. He also argued, “who wants to die or go through the hardship of jungle life. The stories emanating about how the junior cadres are getting exploited are preventing the youth.”

Only a couple of days back, Budhrum Munda, one of the hardcore Maoists was shot dead in a brief encounter inside the jungles of Jharkhand, very close to Odisha border. His body had received multiple gunshots.

According to a security personnel, “Our intelligence is strong enough to keep an eye on Naxal movements. This election really showed some positive developments, which is good for the country as a whole.”

Caption: Budhrum Munda who was killed recently in an encounter

Modi, Shah, Kharge, Rahul to visit again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 26: Top leaders of the BJP and the Congress will be on another round of visit to Odisha ahead of the last phase of simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in the state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Odisha May 29 and address three public meetings in Baripada (Mayurbhanj), Balasore and Kendrapara, BJP's Odisha unit vice-president Golak Mohapatra told reporters here Sunday.

A day before his scheduled visit, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will address three rallies in Chandbali, Korei and Nimapada May 28.

Voting will be held in Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur Lok Sabha seats and 42 Assembly segments under these parliamentary constituencies June 1.

Meanwhile, AICC in-charge for Odisha, Ajoy Kumar said Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge will address election rallies in Balasore and Bhadrak May 29, while Rahul Gandhi will address a public meeting in Balasore, May 30.

BJP to get majority seats in Odisha, claims Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: BJP is set for a maiden majority in the Odisha Assembly and expects to win 75 seats in the 147-member House, asserted Union Home Minister Amit Shah during an interview to PTI.

Shah said that the BJP will get a bigger win in opposition-ruled states due to a ‘positive mandate’ for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Lok Sabha polls, as he slammed the opposition’s criticism of the Election Commission as a ploy to cover up for its impending loss.

Making his Lok Sabha projection for the BJP in the states where the ruling party is eyeing major gains, he said it will win anywhere between 24 to 30 seats in West Bengal and 16 to 17 in Odisha. Its alliance will bag nearly 17 seats in Andhra Pradesh.

“We will surely cross 400 seats. We will also form governments in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh,” Shah claimed.



During the interview, Shah claimed that his party has not resorted to any religion-based campaign but insisted that if canvassing against reservation for Muslims, and reaching out to voters on the abolition of Article 370 and implementing a Uniform Civil Code is religion-based campaign, then the BJP has done it and will continue doing so.

He dismissed the opposition’s criticism of the Election Commission for its handling of poll data and the issue of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), saying that similar protocols and practices have been followed in previous assembly polls, including Telangana, West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh

where the BJP lost.

“If those elections were fair, then this election is also fair. When you see defeat, you start crying in advance and try to find excuses to go abroad. This can’t go on and on. They want to go on vacation June 6. So, they are telling something or the other,” he said.

The Congress’s questions about the polling process are aimed at covering up Rahul Gandhi’s failure, he said.

Shah said the opposition party had not offered any such suggestion at the customary all-party meeting called by the poll watchdog before the elections. “Whenever the opposition loses an election, they raise some questions. There is zero possibility of rigging in EVMs and they want an election which can be rigged.”

With six phases of the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls over, the BJP’s key strategist said the party’s assertion that its alliance will cross the 400-seat mark when the poll results are out June 4 is not merely a poll slogan but a well thought-out goal.



Odia film actors Sabyasachi and Archita campaigning for BJD's Simulia Assembly nominee Subhasini Sahoo in Khaira of Balasore district, Sunday



BJP workers participate in a roadshow for party's Dhamnagar Assembly nominee Suryabanshi Suraj at Dhusuri in Bhadrak district, Sunday



BJP's Balasore Lok Sabha candidate Pratap Chandra Sarangi and other party leaders participating in a preparatory meeting ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to the district, May 29



AICC secretary and assistant in-charge of Odisha Shah Nawaj Choudhary addressing a press meet over the alleged 'failure' of the Union and state governments, in the presence of district Congress president Sanjiv Kumar Giri in Balasore, Sunday



BRAVING RAIN: BJD's Paradip Assembly nominee Geetanjali Routray and her supporters campaigning in a waterlogged area of Paradip port town following rain triggered by cyclonic storm 'Remal', Sunday

Democracy, Constitution under threat: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, May 26: Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal Sunday attacked the BJP, saying the country's freedom, Constitution and democracy are in danger and called upon Punjab to once again be at the forefront to save the nation. The AAP leader said the people of Punjab played a big role in the country's freedom movement.

“So many sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom. Today, our country's freedom, Constitution and democracy are in danger,” Kejriwal said during a townhall programme with the traders and industrialists

in Ferozepur.

Kejriwal, who is on interim bail until June 1 in the Delhi excise policy case, sought support of the people of Punjab and said that they need to come forward and be at forefront in the fight to save the Constitution, democracy and freedom in this country.

Referring to his arrest, Kejriwal said, “On March 16, the general elections were announced and they arrested me March 21. They arrested me, my party leaders Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, and then Modi says in Delhi let's fight election.”

Targeting the BJP-led Centre, the AAP leader said that several opposition leaders have been

jailed and “then they say, let's fight election”.

“In Maharashtra, Modi ji broke the NCP into two parts, snatched its party and its symbol, divided the Shiv Sena into two parts, snatched its symbol, arrested Hemant Soren (ex-Jharkhand chief minister) before the polls and then he says let's fight election,” said Kejriwal.

“Like in Pakistan, they arrested Imran Khan, snatched his party symbol and after what they did to his party they then held elections and won. Had Imran been out (not jailed), his party would have won, everyone knows.”

In Bangladesh, (PM) Sheikh Hasina put all opposition lead-

ers in jail and then held elections and won,” he added citing more examples.

Escalating his attack on the BJP regime, Kejriwal said, “Hamare desh k andar bhee ab tanashahi ho rahi hai (Dictatorship is now taking place in our country too)...If at this juncture we do not defeat Modi, then democracy, Constitution will not be saved.”

Referring to Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit, Kejriwal said despite the AAP having overwhelming majority “if he can stop the bills passed by the Assembly then it is an attack on democracy.”

“You have to raise voice against this,” he said.

INDIA bloc will give SC, ST, OBC quota to Muslims: Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mau (UP), May 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday claimed INDIA bloc parties will rewrite the Constitution to provide reservation on the basis of religion, and alleged they want to turn the country's majority community into second-class citizens.

Addressing a public meeting in Purvanchal region's Ghosi here, he also alleged the opposition grouping will end the reservation given to SC, ST, and OBC, and give all of it to Muslims. He accused INDIA parties of making different castes fight among themselves.

Attacking INDIA bloc partners Samajwadi Party and Congress, Modi said they have neglected Purvanchal over the years and turned it into a “region of mafia, poverty and helplessness”.

The SP and INDIA bloc are making castes fight among themselves so that they become weak, he alleged, adding this is being done “to divert people's attention from the real issues”.

“Today, I have come to alert the people of Purvanchal and Ghosi about the big conspiracy of the INDIA Alliance,” Modi said, and counted the grouping's three “big conspiracies”.

“First, the people of INDIA Alliance will change the

Constitution and write in it afresh that reservation should be given on the basis of religion in India. Second, these INDIA people will end the reservation given to SC, ST and OBC. Third, they will give the entire reservation to Muslims on the basis of religion.”

He said, “A third method has been created to circumvent the OBC reservation. They are declaring Muslim castes as OBC overnight. Recently, the Calcutta High Court has rejected OBC reservation for 77 Muslim castes.”

The PM went on to add, “Today, the SP, Congress and INDIA people want to make the majority community in India second-class citizens.”

He alleged those associated with the Samajwadi Party kept Purvanchal backward under a conspiracy and the people of the region will continue to punish them for this.

“The families of SP and Congress had their dynastic mindset turn Purvanchal into a region of mafia, poverty and helplessness,” he said.

“The people associated with INDIA Alliance who set your houses afire, who encroached upon your land, who emboldened rioters, who shed tears for the mafia, such people should not be allowed to set foot in Purvanchal,” said the PM.

The rally was held in support of BJP and NDA candidates from Ghosi, Salempur and Ballia Lok Sabha seats.

Referring to the SP and Congress' previous manifestos, Modi said, “In 2012 (Assembly polls), the SP had clearly written in its manifesto that the reservation that Babasaheb gave to Dalits, similar reservation will be given to Muslims.”

Modi further claimed the Congress declared educational establishments as minority institutions and gave reservation to Muslims there.

“Before 2014, the Congress changed the law overnight to declare schools, colleges and universities as minority institutions. They declared thousands of educational institutions as minority institutions. Earlier, the reservation SC, ST and OBC students were getting there was completely stopped and Muslims got reservation.”

“What can be a bigger betrayal than this of the sons and daughters of Dalits, backward tribals,” he asked.

The entire world is watching the ongoing general elections in India, he said, adding the more powerful government India elects, the more powerful prime minister it gets, and its echo will be heard in every country of the world.

of the day quote

Be it Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Mau or the surrounding districts, we lived under the shadow of fear and terror. When the BJP got your blessings, Ram Lalla was installed in Ayodhya and mafia were eliminated

YOGI ADITYANATH | CM, UTTAR PRADESH

The Modi government has waived industrialists' loans worth more than Rs 25 lakh crore. The INDIA bloc government will waive the loans of farmers and implement MSP for them

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

Inside your home, your party MP is beaten up and you remain silent. I want to ask you, does such a person have the right to continue as Chief Minister?

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER, INDIA

X POST OF THE DAY

Did the Modi govt secretly transport 200 tonnes of RBI's gold to Switzerland in 2014?

What did the govt get in return for exchanging the gold? Why is the information about the transaction not available in public domain?

2014: Gold price 28,006/10gram
2024: Gold 74685/10 grams

@HOORSHAIKH_FIZA

SHORT TAKES

Army defuses three bombs

New Delhi: Three improvised explosives devices (IEDs) were defused by the army in Manipur's Imphal East district, a defence spokesperson said today. The IEDs were found concealed on the road connecting Nongdam and Itham villages, 46 km apart. The section of the road where the IEDs were found is closer to Maphou dam and Nongdam village. "During a routine area-dominance and surveillance operation, army personnel noticed the three IEDs placed, in tandem, along the road. Army column acted swiftly and cordoned off the area," the defence spokesperson said.

Tribal, son shot dead by Naxalites

Chatra: A tribal man and his son were shot dead allegedly by Naxalites in Jharkhand's Chatra district on suspicion that they were police informers, officials said Sunday. The incident happened at Hindia Kala village in the Kunda police station area Saturday night, they said. The deceased, identified as Chhedhi Birhor (48) and his son Pankaj Birhor (30), belonged to a particularly vulnerable tribal group, they added.

Tiger kills woman

Bangalore: A woman, tending her flock of goats, was brutally attacked, dragged over 200 metres inside the forest, and killed by a tiger in Mysuru last evening, officials said. Her mutilated and dismembered body was found this morning in Bandipur's N Begur range. One of her legs was missing and officials believe the tiger mauled her and devoured her leg. Chikki, 48, a resident of Mysuru's N Begur village, was grazing her flock in the Moorband Hill when she was attacked. Her companion rushed to the nearby village for help.



He (Modi) makes big claims that the economy is growing at a rapid pace. I want to ask if it is growing so fast then and if there is progress in the country then why there is no progress in your (people) lives?
PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

AKOLA HOTTEST CITY

Akola has been the hottest city in Maharashtra over the last two days when it recorded the maximum temperature of more than 45 degrees Celsius, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD) data



CYCLONE REMAL Over 1L evacuated in WB

Bengal's coastal areas have been put on high alert as the cyclone, accompanied by high-velocity winds, has already triggered rain in several parts of the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 26: Severe cyclonic storm 'Remal' has intensified and is expected to make landfall between the coasts of Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal around Sunday midnight, prompting the evacuation of over 1 lakh people from vulnerable areas of the state to safety. Bengal's coastal areas have been put on high alert as the cyclone, accompanied by high-velocity winds, has already triggered rain in several parts of the state.

According to an India Meteorological Department (IMD) bulletin, the 'Remal' was centred 160 km south-southeast of Sagar Island at 6pm.

The cyclone, which has a maximum sustained wind speed of 100-110 kmph, gusting to 120 kmph, is likely to hit land between Sagar Islands in West Bengal and Khepupara near Mongla port in Bangladesh by Sunday midnight, officials said. By 3 pm, the West Bengal government had evacuated around 1.10 lakh people from coastal and vulnerable areas and shifted them to cyclone shelters, schools, and colleges.

State minister Akhil Giri said, "Our experience in tackling Cyclone Amphan and Cyclone Yaas will be put to good use." West Bengal Governor Dr CV Ananda Bose said he is closely monitoring the situation and is in constant touch with state and central experts to ensure a coordinated response to counter it.



Bose emphasised the importance of safety for residents in the coastal regions of Bengal, urging them to adhere to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for cyclones. The cyclone has already caused light rain and winds in areas like Digha, Kakdwip, and Jaynagar, which are expected to intensify Monday. IMD's eastern regional head Somnath Dutta said from Sunday evening, districts in south Bengal would experience squally winds of 45-55 kmph, gusting to 65 kmph, affecting Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, and Purba Medinipur. "This will gradually increase to gale wind speed, reaching 70 to 80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph," he told reporters.

Dutta warned that surface wind speeds in coastal areas of West Bengal could reach 100-120 kmph, gusting to 135 kmph from Sunday evening to Monday morning. However, he mentioned that the damage caused by 'Remal' would be less severe compared to the destruction wrought by Super Cyclone Amphan in 2020.

Amphan, which was categorised as a super cyclone, had made landfall May 20 in 2020 over Sagar Island and caused widespread destruction in Kolkata, South and North 24 Parganas, Howrah and Nadia.

The IMD has warned of localised flooding and major damage to vulnerable structures, power and communication lines, kutcha roads, crops, and orchards in the South and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting Sunday to review response and preparedness for cyclonic storm

DELHI HOSPITAL FIRE

Families yet to identify babies

NCPCR CHAIRPERSON PRIYANK KANOONGO BLAMED THE AUTHORITIES FOR THE FIRE INCIDENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: "Allah ko pyaari ho gayi meri beti," said Ansaar, whose 11-day-old daughter was among the seven newborns killed in a blaze at a child-care hospital here.

The fire broke out at the Baby Care New Born Hospital in Vivek Vihar area around 11:30 pm Saturday and spread to two adjacent buildings. The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) had to deploy 16 fire tenders to douse the flames in three buildings.

With post-mortem pending, authorities are yet to hand over Ansaar his baby's body. The other six families are also waiting. "I saw my baby yesterday. She had a fever and was admitted to the hospital two days ago. This morning I was told about the fire," said the mother of 17-day-old Ruhi, who was killed in the fire.

The grieving mother recalled that when she admitted Ruhi to the hospital she was wearing a "Najar ki mala" to ward off evil spirits. "They (hospital staff) removed that and the necklace. Ruhi was in a diaper," she said. Ansaar's daughter was born at another hospital May 15. "She developed some health issues and was admitted to the hospital

(Baby Care New Born Hospital) 10 days ago," he said. "Allah ko pyaari ho gayi meri beti," he said and added that he learnt about the incident from his friends. "When I reached, I came to know that my daughter had died," Ansaar said.

For Masialam, a labourer, tragedy struck him again after five years. "I lost my son five years ago. On Saturday, my newborn son died. What kind of facilities do they have?" he asked.

Many parents sold their jewellery or loaned money to pay for their children's treatment at the hospital, Masialam, the father of a three-year-old girl, said.

He said his son was born at another hospital and was admitted to Baby Care New Born Hospital after he developed an infection.

Parvinder Kumar, a relative of another victim, said, "We have not informed her mother yet."

The hospital is to be blamed and strict action should be taken against its owner, he said. The Kumars are farmers and belong to the Uttar Pradesh's Baghat district. Hritik Chaudhary, whose newborn son also died in the fire, said that every single official who is visiting the hospital is tight-lipped about the incident.

FIR against six partners of Rajkot game zone, 2 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 26: An owner partner of the Rajkot-based TRP game zone and its manager were arrested on the charge of culpable homicide after a devastating blaze killed 27 persons including children, while it emerged the facility was operated without fire NOC.

The game zone had fire safety equipment but action taken to control the fire was not sufficient, leading to the tragedy Saturday, a senior police officer said Sunday, a day after the tragedy.

The Gujarat High Court Sunday took suo motu cognisance of the fire tragedy, terming it a prima facie "man-made disaster". The bench noted a stock of highly inflammable materials such as petrol, fibres and fibreglass sheets were stored at the facility. "Yuvrajsinh Solanki, a partner in the Raceway Enterprise, which operated the TRP game zone, and the entertainment facility's manager Nitin Jain have so far been arrested," said Rajkot Deputy Commissioner of Police (crime) Parthrajsinh Gohil. Rajkot taluka police have booked six persons for culpable homicide not amounting to murder including Dhaval Dhalval Corporation proprietor Dhaval Thakkar, Raceway Enterprise partners Ashoksinh Jadeja, Kiritsinh Jadeja, Prakashchand Hiran, Yuvrajsinh Solanki and Rahul Rathod, as per the FIR.

Four different teams of the crime branch have been formed to nab the four absconding accused, Bhargava said. The game zone had fire safety equipment but action taken to control the blaze was not sufficient, leading to the tragedy Saturday, he said.

SNIPPETS

SpiceJet flight returns to Delhi after bird hit

New Delhi: A SpiceJet aircraft bound for Leh returned to Delhi airport following a bird-hit on engine 2 Sunday, prompting authorities to declare a full emergency at the airport. As per official sources, the flight took off from IGI airport at 1030 hours and landed safely at about 1100 hours. "SpiceJet B737 aircraft May 26, 2024, operating SG-123 from Delhi to Leh returned to Delhi after suffering a bird hit on engine 2," said the airline spokesperson. "The aircraft landed back safely in Delhi and passengers were deplaned normally. The aircraft made a normal landing and not an emergency landing," added the spokesperson. According to sources, the aircraft was carrying 135 people.

13 Indians lured into unsafe work, rescued

New Delhi: Thirteen Indians, who were lured into illegal work in Laos, have been rescued and are being sent back home, the Indian embassy in the Southeast Asian country said Sunday. Last month, 17 Indian workers were rescued in Laos and were repatriated to India. "In our continued work to ensure safety & well-being of Indians as matter of top priority, Embassy successfully rescues & repatriates 13 Indians, including 7 Odiya workers from a wood factory in Attapeu province & 6 Indian youth from Golden Triangle SEZ, Bokeo province of Laos," the Indian embassy said on 'X'. "So far, Embassy has rescued 428 Indians from Lao PDR. We thank Lao authorities for their cooperation, it said. The embassy also appealed to Indian nationals looking for jobs in Laos to be very careful so that they are not lured into fake or illegal employment.

Liquor policy: Oppn alleges Kerala mins 'lied'

Kochi/Thiruvananthapuram: The Opposition Congress and the BJP Sunday castigated the Left government in Kerala for its liquor policy, accusing Excise Minister M B Rajesh and Tourism Minister P A Mohammed Riyas of "lying" to the public by claiming that no discussion had taken place regarding the scrapping of the "dry day" norm. While the Congress questioned the silence of Pinarayi Vijayan on the issue and sought to know why a vigilance probe had not been ordered into the allegations, the saffron party reminded the CM that his friend and Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal and his cabinet colleagues had to go to jail over a similar issue for changing the government policy. The Congress urged the government to announce a judicial probe into the allegations and sack the Excise minister, while the BJP pressed for CM Vijayan to hand over the investigation to a central agency. Addressing a press conference in Ernakulam, Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly V D Satheesan wondered why a vigilance probe has not been ordered into the allegations despite receiving a complaint. Satheesan rejected the claims of state Tourism and Excise Ministers that no discussions were held with regard to the "dry day" norm.



Labourers carry lemons at a wholesale fruit market on a hot summer day in Nagpur, Maharashtra

Rise in cancer incidences among younger people in India: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: Twenty per cent of cancer patients who called an NGO-run helpline to seek a second opinion were below 40 years of age, indicating a rise of cancer incidences amongst younger people, data from the organisation stated.

There were 1,368 callers between March 1 and May 15, according to the Cancer Mukht Bharat Foundation, launched by a group of oncologists.

The study showed that 60 per cent of the cancer patients below the age of 40 years were men.

It also found that the most prevalent cases were head and neck cancer (26 per cent), closely followed by Gastrointestinal cancers (16 per cent), breast cancer

(15 per cent) and then blood cancers (9 per cent).

The most number of calls were from Hyderabad, followed by Meerut, Mumbai and New Delhi, a statement by the NGO said.

The helpline number (93-555-20202) was launched for the patients to seek second opinion free of cost. It is operational from 10 am to 5 pm from Monday to Saturday. Cancer patients can call the helpline number to speak to leading oncologists directly or even do a video call to discuss their cancer treatment.

Dr Ashish Gupta, Principal Investigator and senior oncologist who is heading the Cancer Mukht Bharat Campaign said that since the launch of the helpline number, it has proven to be a support system for can-



cer patients across India and almost hundreds of calls are received every day.

"This study helps us make a more targeted cancer approach towards treatment and make India 'Cancer Mukht'. We found head and neck cancer was most

The study also found that 27 per cent of cases diagnosed in India are in stages 1 and 2 of cancer whereas 63 per cent are in stage 3 or 4 cancer

The most common question of the cancer patients was for a second opinion and to confirm whether their cancer treatment was correct and up to date

prevalent which is nearly entirely preventable by lifestyle modification, vaccinations and screening strategies. Breast and colon cancers have very effective screening strategies for finding cancer in the early stages. Unfortunately as is representa-

tive of the population at large in India we found nearly 2/3rds of cancers were detected late likely due to low adoption of proper screening," Dr Gupta said. The study also found that 27 per cent of cases diagnosed in India are in stages 1 and 2 of cancer whereas 63 per cent are in stage 3 or 4 cancer. The most common question of the cancer patients was for a second opinion and to confirm whether their cancer treatment was correct and up to date. Some also check the availability of the latest treatment or medicine to treat their respective cancer as in cancer treatment as new medicines are approved almost every week, he said.

The second most common question we found was patients asking what stage their cancer

is in indicating the importance of education to cancer patients and thirdly patients commonly asked regarding their family members, what they can do to prevent cancer highlighting the importance of cancer screening and awareness, he said.

Cancer Mukht Bharat campaign aims to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer on individuals and communities through education and early detection, Dr Gupta said.

Further, the study showed that 67 per cent of the cancer patients who reached out to the organization were the ones who were taking cancer treatment from private hospitals. While 33 per cent were those were taking treatments from government hospitals, he said.

international



“We have moved from assisting 5.5 million a year to about 1.5 million people in Syria. When I look across the world, this is the (aid) programme that has shrunk the most in the shortest period for time”
CARL SKAU | DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

HOUTHIS FREE OVER 100 PRISONERS

Yemen's Houthi group freed more than 100 detainees in Sanaa Sunday, calling the move a “unilateral humanitarian initiative” to pardon prisoners and return them to their families. Yemen's internationally recognised government said the detainees were not soldiers, but civilians the Houthis had kidnapped from homes, mosques and workplaces



of the day quote

I am appealing to the leaders of the world who are still aside from the global efforts of the Global Peace Summit – to President Biden, the leader of the United States, and to President Xi, the leader of China
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

The international community will not accept any country creating waves in the Taiwan Strait and affecting regional stability
LAI CHING-TE | PRESIDENT, TAIWAN

If we do not reform unemployment insurance, we risk stalling on the road to full employment. This reform will allow us to create ever more jobs in our country
GABRIEL ATTAL | PRIME MINISTER, FRANCE

Over 670 buried in Papua New Guinea landslide

Sydney, May 26: More than 670 people have died in Papua New Guinea's massive landslide, the UN migration agency estimated Sunday as rescue efforts continued. Media in the South Pacific nation north of Australia had previously estimated Friday's landslide had buried more than 300 people. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said earlier Sunday that only five bodies had been retrieved from the rubble. The agency based its death toll estimates on information provided by officials at Yambali Village in the Enga province, who say more than 150 houses were buried in Friday's landslide, Serhan Aktoprak, the chief



of the agency's mission in Papua New Guinea said in an email statement. More than six villages have been impacted by the landslide in the province's Mulitaka region, about 600 km (370 miles) from the capital Port Moresby, said Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. “Land is still sliding, rocks are falling, ground soil is crack-

ing due to constant increased pressure and ground water is running thus area is posing an extreme risk for everyone,” Aktoprak said. More than 250 houses nearby have been abandoned by the inhabitants, who had taken temporary shelter with their relatives and friends, and some 1,250 people have been displaced, the agency said. “People are using digging sticks, spades, large agricultural forks to remove the bodies buried under the soil,” Aktoprak said. The IOM said more than 100 houses, an elementary school, small businesses and stalls, a guesthouse, and a petrol station were buried. The UN's Papua New Guinea office said three bodies were retrieved from an area where 50 to

60 homes had been destroyed, while six people, including a child, were pulled from rubble alive. Aid group CARE Australia said late Saturday that nearly 4,000 people lived in the impact zone but the number affected was probably higher as the area is “a place of refuge for those displaced by conflicts” in nearby areas. The landslide left debris up to 8 metres deep across 200 square km, cutting off road access and making relief efforts difficult, CARE said. Helicopters were the only way to reach the area, the Australian Broadcasting Corp reported. Aid groups have said more homes could be at risk if the landslide continues down the mountain, as the terrain remains unstable.

Burkina Faso extends junta rule by 5 years

Dakar (Senegal), May 26: The military leader of Burkina Faso will remain in office for another five years following the signing of a new charter after national consultations in the capital. Civil society representatives, the security and defence forces and lawmakers in the transitional assembly participated in the talks Saturday in Ouagadougou, which most political parties boycotted. “The duration of the transition is fixed at 60 months from July 2, 2024,” said Colonel Moussa Diallo, the chairman of the organising committee of the national dialogue process, in a speech after the talks.



Burkina Faso is one of a growing list of West African countries where the military has taken power, accusing the elected governments of failing to keep their promises. The current junta seized power in September 2022 by ousting the military regime of Lt Col Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba about eight months after it staged a coup to remove democratically elected President Roch Marc Kaboré.

The transitional government has been running Burkina Faso under a constitution approved by a national assembly that included army officers, civil society groups and traditional and religious leaders. The junta had set a goal of conducting elections to return the country to democratic rule by July 2024. Capt Ibrahim Traore was named the transitional president. However, since its inception, the junta has struggled to end Burkina Faso's security challenges — the very reason that it said prompted it to take over power in September 2022. Around half of Burkina Faso's territory remains outside of government control.

The West African country has been ravaged by growing attacks by Muslim extremists linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. The violence has killed thousands, displaced more than 2 million people and pushed tens of thousands to the brink of starvation.

25 held, over 450 booked after attack on Christians in Pak

Lahore, May 26 : Police in Pakistan's Punjab province Sunday booked over 450 people and arrested 25 of them under terrorism and other charges for attacking members of the minority Christian community and police personnel on the issue of the alleged desecration of a religious book. An enraged mob led by radical Islamist Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) activists Saturday attacked the Christian community members in Mujahid Colony, Sargodha district of Punjab, some 200 kms from Lahore, and injured two Christians and 10 policemen. The mob burned and ransacked the homes and properties of Christians. According to the FIR, over 450 people, 50 of them are nominated, surrounded the residence and shoe factory of Nazir Masih (an elderly Christian) accusing him of desecration of the religious book. The mob set fire to the shoe factory, some shops and a couple of houses. “It also brutally torched Masih but timely arrival of a heavy contingent of police saved the life of Masih and 10 other members of the Christian community,” the FIR says. Although the family of Masih denied desecration of the religious book but the mob wanted to lynch him.

Sunak faces mass exodus

IN A MAJOR BLOW TO UK PM, 78 MPs RESIGN AHEAD OF GENERAL ELECTION

London, May 26: After declaring a general election for July 4, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is reportedly spending his first Saturday with his closest advisers as he takes an “unusual step” of a day away from public events over the first weekend of the campaign. The 44-year-old Indian-origin leader is taking some private time out with his aides and family amid a mass exodus of senior members of Parliament from his embattled Conservative Party. Cabinet ministers Michael Gove and Andrea Leadsom became the latest Tory frontliners to announce their decision to not stand for re-election in this summer's polls, taking the number of party members quitting the race to as many as 78.

Gove's announcement in a letter released on social media Friday evening had been anticipated amid strong challenges to incumbent Tories in constituencies around the country. Leadsom released her own letter shortly after, writing to Sunak: “After careful reflection, I have decided not to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming election.” In his letter, Housing Minister Gove wrote that he knew “the toll office can take, as do those closest to me...No one in politics is a conscript. We are volunteers who willingly choose our fate.



And the chance to serve is wonderful. But there comes a moment when you know that it is time to leave. That a new generation should lead.” Former prime minister Theresa May is also among the senior MPs stepping away, with former defence minister Ben Wallace already having announced his decision to leave frontline politics. According to sources quoted by the Guardian newspaper, Sunak is taking the “unusual step” of a day away from public events over the first weekend of the election campaign and instead will spend it in discussion on election strategy with his closest advisers. While one source was quoted

National service must for 18-yr-olds: Sunak

Britain's Conservative Party will introduce mandatory national service for 18-year-olds if it wins the national election July 4, comprising military or community participation, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Sunday. Young adults will be able to choose between spending one weekend a month volunteering over the course of a year, or take up one of 30,000 spaces to spend a year in the armed forces, Sunak said. The announcement followed Labour Party leader Keir Starmer's comments Saturday that he was in favour of allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote. “Britain today faces a future that is more dangerous and more divided. There's no doubt that our democratic values are under threat. That is why we will introduce a bold new model of national service for 18-year-olds,” Sunak said in a statement.

are fluff...I think that the important thing is that we frame this election correctly,” he said. The turmoil came as Labour's lead fell by three points in the first YouGov opinion poll since Rishi Sunak called the snap summer general election on Wednesday. The survey, conducted Thursday and Friday, shows the Conservatives up by one point to 22 per cent, while Labour is down two to 44 per cent.

SHORT TAKES

Flash floods kill 15

Islamabad: Renewed heavy rains have triggered more flash floods in Afghanistan, killing at least 15 people, including 10 members of the same family in the northeast, officials said Sunday. The unusually heavy seasonal rains have been wreaking havoc on multiple parts of the country, killing hundreds of people and destroying property and crops. The UN food agency warned that survivors were unable to make a living. Earlier, the World Food Program said the exceptionally heavy rains in Afghanistan had killed more than 300 people and destroyed thousands of houses, mostly in the northern province of Baghlan May 10 and May 11. Survivors have been left with no home, no land, and no source of livelihood, WFP said.

Macron's rare visit

Berlin: French President Emmanuel Macron lands in Germany Sunday for a three-day state visit followed by a bilateral cabinet meeting as the European Union's two biggest powers seek to show unity ahead of next month's EU parliamentary elections. Macron's trip to the capital Berlin, Dresden in the east and Muenster in the west is the first French presidential state visit to Germany in 24 years. The visit will be watched as a checkup on the health of the German-French relationship that drives EU policymaking, at a time of major challenges for Europe: from the Ukraine war to the possible election of Donald Trump as US president in November.

Storms claim 11

Valley View: Powerful storms killed at least 11 people and left a wide trail of destruction Sunday across Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas after obliterating homes and destroying a truck stop where drivers took shelter during the latest deadly weather to strike the central US.

POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

Rajapaksa eye political comeback

Colombo: Sri Lanka's powerful Rajapaksa clan, which suffered political battering due to the country's worst economic crisis in 2022, will launch its political comeback bid Sunday by targeting the impending elections. Former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, ex-prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and former finance minister Basil Rajapaksa were ousted from power during anti-government protests following the crippling financial and political crisis in 2022. According to the Election Act, the presidential election should occur before the parliamentary elections. The next parliamentary election is not due before August 2025. On Wednesday, President Ranil Wickremesinghe reiterated his intention to hold the presidential election this year ahead of the parliamentary election. Earlier this month, the Elections Commission said the presidential election would be conducted at a date between September 17 and October 16.



SA election: Mandela's party could lose majority for first time in 30 yrs

Johannesburg: South Africans will vote Wednesday with widespread anger over power cuts, joblessness and corruption threatening to end the dominance of the African National Congress, thirty years after Nelson Mandela led it into power. At no point since world media beamed iconic images of Black South African voters queuing to cast ballots for the first time following the end of white-minority rule has the ANC looked so likely to lose its parliamentary majority. Polls suggest the ANC's share of the vote could fall as low as 40%, compared with 57.5% in 2019, which would force the party into a wobbly coalition with rivals - and potentially expose President Cyril Ramaphosa to a leadership challenge. Yet a survey released earlier this week by Afrobarometer suggested a third of voters were undecided, making this poll the most unpredictable in South Africa's democratic history.



Cyclone Remal: B'desh evacuates 8L



A man salvages a cart and other materials as water flows on to the Kuakata beach on the coast of Bay of Bengal caused by the advancing Cyclone Remal in Barisal, Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, May 26: Severe cyclonic storm 'Remal' made landfall in Bangladesh Sunday night as authorities evacuated over 800,000 people from vulnerable areas of the country's low-lying southwestern coastlines to shelters. “The cyclone has made landfall and started crossing the West Bengal coast in India through the south-west side of Mongla and Khepupara coast of Bangladesh around 8:30 pm (local time),” a met office spokesman told reporters. He said the storm approached from Bangladesh's southwestern coastlines and West Bengal's Sagar Island and was proceeding towards the northern direction and was “likely to cross the coastlines in the next five to seven hours”.

The eye of the cyclonic storm is scheduled to cross Bangladesh between 12:00-1:00 am Monday (local time) after which the cyclone is expected to weaken. Officials said a youth is believed to be the first casualty of the storm as tidal surges swept him away while several people were injured in southeastern Patuakhali. Police said an overcrowded ferry carrying more than 50 passengers - double its capacity - sank near Mongla Port, the path of the storm, as people were fleeing to safety. However, the people were rescued with some injuries. Red Crescent volunteers joined hands with government officials, police and fire brigade to alert and motivate people to move to safe shelters. According to Bangladesh meteorology department (BMD),

Ramal is expected to reach maximum wind speeds of up to 120 kilometers per hour, with gusts up to 135 kph. The BMD, however, recorded so far maximum wind speeds of 90 kilometres per hour but feared the wind speed might pick up more pace. “The storm alongside the high tide turned terrifying,” a district administration official in charge of a makeshift control room in Patuakhali, told PTI. Senior BMD meteorologist Muhammad Abul Kalam Mallik shortly before the landfall said the cyclone could unleash a storm surge of up to 12 feet above normal astronomical tide. This is the first cyclone in the Bay of Bengal in this pre-monsoon season and is named Remal (meaning sand in Arabic) according to a system of naming cyclones in the Indian Ocean region.

Trump booed, heckled by raucous crowd

Washington, May 26: Presidential candidate Donald Trump was booed and heckled by many in a raucous audience at the Libertarian National Convention Saturday night, a marked change from the adulation he receives at rallies from his fervently loyal supporters. Libertarians, who believe in limited government and individual freedom, blame Trump, a Republican, for rushing through the creation of a Covid-19 vaccine when he was president

and for not doing more to stop public health restrictions on the unvaccinated during the pandemic. When Trump took to the stage in Washington, there were loud boos and jeers. A smaller section of the crowd, Trump supporters, cheered him. Shortly before he appeared, one Libertarian Party member shouted: “Donald Trump should have taken a bullet!” Trump, who was president between 2017 and 2021, immediately mentioned the total 88 felony charges he faces in four



federal and state prosecutions. “If I wasn't a libertarian I am now,” he said. He denounced the administration of President Joe Biden, his challenger in the November 5 election rematch, and Biden's fellow Democrats as being part of a “rise in left-

wing fascism”. Trump was trying to appeal to libertarians, who have more in common with Republican policy positions than Democrats on issues including taxes and the size of government, in what is expected to be a closely fought election. He added: “We should not be fighting each other.” He asked libertarians to work with him to defeat Biden, an appeal which was greeted by many boos, although the vast majority in the crowd were fiercely opposed to Biden and his administration.

of the day quote

The luxury car segment grew in the range of 20-25 per cent last fiscal. We expect that the growth rate will remain in this range for the next couple of years. And we anticipate to beat this growth rate

RAJAN AMBA | MD, JLR

We are very close to the Lok Sabha election results, and the election verdict will give a boost to FI flows

PRAVESH GOUR | SENIOR TECHNICAL ANALYST, SWASTIKA INVESTMART

In the last three years, especially after the coronavirus pandemic, fares have gone up. Still, the average fares are among the lowest in the world

SANJAY KUMAR | PRESIDENT & CEO, INTERGLOBE TECHNOLOGY QUOTIENT

SHORT TAKES

CCI extends bidding deadline for AI

New Delhi: Fair trade regulator CCI has issued clarifications on the bidding for conducting the study on artificial intelligence and its impact on competition, and has extended the deadline for submission of bids till June 18. Earlier, the deadline for the bids was June 3. In a set of clarifications, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) said bids cannot be submitted through a consortium or a joint venture. Among other eligibility requirements, the minimum annual turnover of ₹50 crore has been retained for the bidders. The last date for submission of bids is June 18 and the financial bids will be opened July 11. The study will cover various aspects, including the ways AI-driven personalised recommendations, services and pricing influence consumer choices.

Mcap of nine of top-10 cos jumps

New Delhi: Nine of the top-10 most-valued firms together added Rs 1,85,320.49 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries Ltd and HDFC Bank stealing the show with maximum gains, in line with rally in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark zoomed 1,404.45 points, or 1.89 per cent. The 30-share BSE Sensex hit its all-time intra-day high of 75,636.50 Friday. From the top-10 most-valued firms pack, only ITC emerged as the laggard. In the ranking of the top-10 companies, Reliance Industries retained the title of the most-valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, SBI, LIC, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, and ITC.



While issuing guidelines for Small Finance Banks to become universal banks, it would be in the larger national interest of financial inclusion if RBI lifts some of the restrictions imposed on such SFBs including tag of SFBs

DINESH KUMAR MITTAL | FORMER FINANCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

GAIL'S GREEN HYDROGEN PLANT INAUGURATED

State-owned GAIL (India) Ltd's maiden green hydrogen plant at Vijaipur in Madhya Pradesh has been commissioned, the company said. The plant marks a major step towards new and alternate energy and has been installed in line with the National Green Hydrogen Mission



Trade deficit concerns rise

INDIA IN TRADE DEFICIT WITH NINE OF TOP 10 TRADING PARTNERS IN FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: India has recorded a trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, with nine of its top 10 trading partners, including China, Russia, Singapore, and Korea, in 2023-24, according to official data.

The data also showed that the deficit with China, Russia, Korea, and Hong Kong increased in the last fiscal compared to 2022-23, while the trade gap with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Indonesia, and Iraq narrowed.

The trade deficit with China rose to \$85 billion, Russia to \$57.2 billion, Korea to \$14.71 billion and Hong Kong to \$12.2 billion in 2023-24 against \$83.2 billion, \$43 billion, \$14.57 billion and \$8.38 billion, respectively, in 2022-23.

China has emerged as India's largest trading partner with \$118.4 billion of two-way commerce in 2023-24, edging past the US.

The bilateral trade between India and the US stood at \$118.28 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

India has a free trade agreement with four of its top trading partners - Singapore, the UAE, Korea and Indonesia (as part of the Asian bloc).



China has emerged as India's largest trading partner with \$118.4bn of two-way commerce in FY24, edging past US

| Deficit with Nations | 2023-24 | 2022-23 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| China | \$85bn | \$83.2bn |
| Russia | \$57.2bn | \$43bn |
| Korea | \$14.71bn | \$14.57bn |
| Hong Kong | \$12.2bn | \$8.38bn |

India has a trade surplus of \$36.74 billion with the US in 2023-24. America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. The surplus is also there with the UK, Belgium, Italy, France and Bangladesh.

India's total trade deficit in the last fiscal narrowed to \$238.3 billion as against \$264.9 billion in the previous fiscal.

According to trade experts, a

deficit is not always bad, if a country is importing raw materials or intermediary products to boost manufacturing and exports. However, it puts pressure on the domestic currency.

Economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that a bilateral trade deficit with a country isn't a major issue unless it makes us overly reliant on that country's critical supplies. However, a rising over-

A rising trade deficit, even from importing raw materials and intermediates, can cause the country's currency to depreciate because more foreign currency is needed for imports. This depreciation makes imports more expensive, worsening the deficit

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

all trade deficit is harmful to the economy.

"A rising trade deficit, even from importing raw materials and intermediates, can cause the country's currency to depreciate because more foreign currency is needed for imports. This depreciation makes imports more expensive, worsening the deficit," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

He said that to cover the growing deficit, the country might need to borrow more from foreign lenders, increasing external debt and this can deplete foreign exchange reserves and signal economic instability to investors, leading to reduced foreign investment.

"Cutting trade deficit requires boosting exports, reducing unnecessary imports, developing domestic industries, and managing currency and debt levels effectively," Srivastava added.

POLL JITTERS

FPIs continue to exit equity mkts



FOREIGN INVESTORS TAKE OUT ₹22,000 CRORE FROM EQUITIES IN MAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: Foreign investors have pulled out a massive ₹22,000 crore from Indian equities so far this month, due to uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections and outperformance of Chinese markets.

This came following a net outflow of over ₹8,700 crore in the entire April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. Before that, FPIs made a net investment of ₹35,098 crore in March and ₹1,539 crore in February.

Going forward, as clarity emerges on the election front, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) are likely to buy in India, since they cannot afford to miss the post-election results rally.

Actually, the rally may begin even before the election results, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

According to data with depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) witnessed a net outflow of ₹22,047 crore from equities this month (till May 24).

"This heavy selling was triggered by the massive outperformance of Chinese stocks. The Hang Seng index, dominated by Chinese stocks (FPIs invest through the Hong Kong market since there are restrictions on investing through the Shanghai market) surged 7.66

per cent during the last month," Vijayakumar, said.

The election-related jitters, too, might have influenced FPI selling.

"In recent times, the US Fed has indicated that it would not go ahead with rate cuts until inflation cools and consistently moves towards the target range. This has raised scepticism over the possibility of an early rate cut. It led to the appreciation in the US Dollar leading to a surge in US Treasury yields. This doesn't augur well for the emerging markets like India, as under such scenario investments also tend to shift from riskier assets like emerging market equities to more safer asset classes such as US Dollar and US Treasuries," he added.

On the other hand, FPIs invested ₹2,009 crore in the debt market during the period under review. Before this outflow, foreign investors put in ₹13,602 crore in March, ₹22,419 crore in February, ₹19,836 crore in January. This inflow was driven by the upcoming inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index.

"The long-term outlook for FPI flows into Indian debt is positive due to India's inclusion in global bond indices. However, near-term flows are being impacted by global macroeconomic uncertainty and volatility. The trend will reverse once the interest rate outlook becomes clearer," Vipul Bhowar, Director, Listed Investments at Waterfield Advisors, said.

Overall, FPIs have withdrawn a net amount of ₹19,824 crore in equities in 2024 so far; however, invested ₹46,917 crore in debt market.

With the on-going general election in the country and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome, foreign investors at this point are wary to enter the Indian equity markets before the announcement of election results

HIMANSHU SRIVASTAVA | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR (MANAGER RESEARCH), MORNINGSTAR INVESTMENT RESEARCH

Telcos told to block int'l spoofed calls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: The government has directed telecom operators to block all incoming international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers, an official statement said Sunday.

The Department of Telecom (DoT) said that it has been reported that fraudsters are making international spoofed calls displaying Indian mobile numbers to Indian citizens and committing cyber-crime and financial frauds.

Such calls appear to be originating within India but are being made by cyber-criminals from abroad by manipulating the calling line identity (CLI) and have been misused in recent cases of fake digital arrests, FedEx scams, drugs or narcotics in courier, impersonation as government and police officials, disconnections of mobile numbers by DoT or TRAI officials, etc.

"DoT and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have devised a system to identify and block such international spoofed calls from reaching any Indian telecom subscriber. Now directions have been issued to the TSPs for blocking such incoming international spoofed calls," the statement said.

The incoming international spoofed calls with Indian landline numbers are being already blocked by the TSPs as per the directions issued by DoT.

'Q4 FY24 GDP may have grown at 6.1-6.7%'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: India's GDP in the fourth quarter of financial year 2023-24 is expected to have grown within the range of 6.1-6.7 per cent, lower than over 8 per cent rate recorded in the previous three quarters, according to projections by various economists.

The GDP numbers for the fourth quarter (January-March 2024) and the provisional estimates for the 2023-24 fiscal year are scheduled to be released by the government on May 31.

According to economists, the expected growth in 2023-24 fiscal is estimated to be in the range of 7.6-7.8 per cent.

The Indian economy grew 8.2 per cent in the June quarter, 8.1 per cent in the September quarter and 8.4 per cent in the December quarter of 2023-24.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Chief



Economist Upasna Bhardwaj said high frequency data suggests robust growth across the board. Also, trade and hotels have held up in the fourth quarter.

"Manufacturing activities have also been good, and construction linked and investment segments should be doing better, but agriculture sector growth could be a laggard and see contraction during the quarter. We are expecting 6.1 per cent GDP growth for the fourth quarter and as a result, the full-year

number for GDP growth should be close to 7.6 per cent," Bhardwaj said.

India's GDP expanded 6.1 per cent in the March quarter of 2022-23 fiscal, as per May 31, 2023 estimates. The growth for full fiscal 2022-23 was 7 per cent.

"We are looking at some moderation in economic activity in the services segment and also on the industrial side across the board. That is the reason why Gross Value Added (GVA) numbers are expected at 5.7 per cent for the fourth quarter, while 6.1 per cent is GDP number," she added.

As far as the current fiscal (2024-25) is concerned, Kotak Mahindra Bank expects growth to be 6.6 per cent but with an upward bias. Bhardwaj said rural consumption is likely to pick up pace, but exports growth could be impacted in the second half of the current fiscal.

Failure to appoint directors: IOC, GAIL, ONGC fined again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: State-owned oil and gas giants including Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), explorers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), gas utility GAIL, and refiner Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) for not meeting the listing requirement in the January-March quarter.

Stock exchanges imposed a cumulative fine of ₹34 lakh on oil

refining and fuel marketing giants Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), explorers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), gas utility GAIL, and refiner Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) for not meeting the listing requirement in the January-March quarter.

The companies were slapped a fine of ₹5,42,800 each for the third quarter (October-December 2023). They had faced a similar fine for the second quarter (July-September 2023).

For non-compliance in April-June 2023, ONGC was slapped with ₹3.36 lakh fine, IOC ₹5.36 lakh and GAIL ₹2.71 lakh fine. HPCL and BPCL were each asked to pay ₹3.6 lakh fine, while Oil India had faced a penalty of ₹5.37 lakh.

Summer trips up 40%; hospitality, travel biz see buoyant demand

In terms of most booked holiday packages this summer, destinations with cool mountain terrains are the top picks with Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir, Goa, Kerala and the North East emerging as most sought after places

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: As Indian travellers pack their bags to escape the scorching heat, there has been a 40 per cent on-year increase in summer travel this year, with hospitality and travel services providers noticing buoyant demand.

Although the ongoing general elections have had a minor impact on corporate and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) business, hotels are finding increased retail business with beach destinations still fighting it out with hill stations for the favoured holiday site.

"Those in the Northern part

of the country head to the hills to escape the heat. There is also movement from the cities to nearby tourist or leisure destinations. Industry sources estimate a 30 to 40 per cent increase in the summer travel this year as compared to last year," Hotel Association of India, President and Radisson Hotel Group Chairman-South Asia, KB Kachru told PTI.

MakeMyTrip Co-Founder & Group CEO Rajesh Magow said, "Summer is always one of the biggest quarters of the year in terms of travel intent, and this year too, the buoyancy in the sector continues. We are observing a healthy growth in searches over those recorded



last year at this time."

According to MakeMyTrip's summer travel trends, the family travel segment has grown by 20 per cent this year, as compared to the summer of 2023, while solo travel grew by 10 per cent over last year's numbers.

"While elections might have a minor impact on corporate and MICE business, retail business has increased by 20 per cent compared to the same time last

year at the group level," Royal Orchid Hotels Ltd Chairman and Managing Director, Chander K Baljee said.

The major locations benefiting from increased occupancy are hill hotels, resorts, and other leisure destinations, he added.

Baljee further said, "Mashobra's (in Himachal Pradesh) retail business has increased almost five-fold with slight price rationalisation, and Mussoorie's retail occupancy



Air travel has seen immense growth because of the campaign of the Election Commission to celebrate the festival of democracy and a large number of citizens are travelling to cast their precious vote in their home towns

KB KACHRU | PRESIDENT, HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

has doubled. Goa witnessed a 50 per cent increase in retail occupancy compared to last year."

On the other hand, hospitality and travel-tech firm OYO said as per its bookings for May and June 2024, beach destinations are seeing a higher preference among travellers compared to mountains this summer.

"Beaches account for 53 per cent of the total leisure bookings, demonstrating a strong inclination towards coastal vacations even during the hot summer months. On the other hand, mountain destinations, which make up 47 per cent of the bookings, are also drawing considerable interest, particularly as we move into June," a spokesperson of OYO said.

Goa continues to be the most popular beach destination, followed by Varkala, Pondicherry, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

However, the spokesperson said, "The early trends for June indicate that mountains will take over beaches. Among these, Nainital tops the list, followed by Rishikesh, Manali, Mussoorie, and Darjeeling. This indicates a growing trend of travellers seeking the serene and cool environment of the mountains as the summer progresses."

BharatPe, PhonePe end disputes on 'Pe' suffix

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: Fintech unicorns BharatPe Group and PhonePe Group have amicably settled all long-standing legal disputes pertaining to the use of the trademark with the suffix 'Pe', both companies said in a joint statement.

BharatPe and PhonePe had been involved in long-drawn legal disputes across multiple courts, over the course of the last five years. The settlement will put an end to all open judicial proceedings, the statement said.

"BharatPe and PhonePe amicably settled all long-standing trademark disputes," the statement said. As a next step, parties have already taken steps to withdraw all opposition against each other in the trademark registry, which will help them to proceed with the registration of their respective trademarks, it said.

"This is a positive development for the industry. I appreciate the maturity and professionalism shown by the Management of both sides, working closely to resolve all outstanding legal issues and moving ahead to focus their energy and resources in building robust digital payment ecosystems," BharatPe, Chairman of the Board, Rajnish Kumar said.

Both organisations will undertake to take other necessary steps to comply with the obligations under the settlement agreement in respect of all cases before Delhi High Court and Bombay High Court.

Knights are kings of IPL

KOLKATA DECIMATE HYDERABAD BY 8 WICKETS IN THE MOST LOP-SIDED FINAL PLAYED TILL DATE IN HISTORY OF TOURNAMENT

AGENCIES

Chennai, May 26: Starc reality hit Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) as first Mitchell Starc (2/14) blew their top-order away and then Venkatesh Iyer (52 n o, 26b, 4x4, 3x6) dominated the show with the bat as Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) were crowned kings of IPL. After restricting SRH to just 113, the lowest total in the history of the IPL finals, KKR romped home to win in just 10.3 overs losing two wickets in the process. After the early departure of Sunil Narine (6), Venkatesh along with Rahanullah Gurbaz (39, 32b, 5x4, 2x6) put on 91 runs for the second wicket to completely outplay SRH.

This is the third time KKR have won the title, the other two coming in 2012 and 2014. Incidentally, both in 2012 and 2014 Gautam Gambhir (called GG by all his teammates) was the skipper of the side and this year he is the mentor. He has been credited with changing the fortunes of KKR, this time also. Such has been his impact on the game, that now the BCCI is seriously contemplating to appoint him as the head coach of the Indian team. There can be no doubt that without GG, this triumph wouldn't have been possible.

Speaking after the game, all-rounder Andre Russell (3/19) pointed out that the ability of the bowlers to adapt and adjust



Brief scores: SRH 113 in 18.3 overs (Pat Cummins 24, Andre Russell 3/19, Mitchell Starc 2/14, Harshit Rana 2/24) lost to KKR 114 for 2 in 10.3 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 52 n o, Rahanullah Gurbaz 39) by eight wickets.

to the conditions have been one of the main reasons KKR's successful run. "We realized early on in the final, the pitch was slow and hence we decided to vary our pace. We did that quite successfully and the wicket column is testimony to that fact," Russell stated after the trophy-handing ceremony. "All those who bowled today got wickets, it just goes to show how meticulously things were planned," Russell added.

Indeed it was as skipper Pat Cummins was the top scorer for SRH with 24. No one else could even cross that barrier as the

KKR bowlers had the opposition batters in a stranglehold. Supporting Starc and Russell was Harshit Rana (2/24) while Vaibhav Arora, Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy shared three wickets among themselves. The explosive Hyderabad batting had been blasting the opposition

bowlers. However, against KKR they couldn't do anything.

KKR bowling coach Bharat Arun attributed the title win to hard work and some tremendous bowling by spinners Narine and Chakravarthy. "Not only were they just choking runs, they were also getting wickets. They always had the opposition under pressure and certainly they have played a major role in this year's victory," Arun said. "I had no doubt regarding the form of Starc. He is a big match player and he has again delivered when it matters the most," added Arun. All through the tournament,

whenever, the cameras have panned on him, GG never had a smile on his face. Sunday he definitely had a big one. Why wouldn't he? He had the biggest grin on his face and he went around the ground with his daughter in his lap. He looked animated, had plenty of things to say to all those who talked to him. Shah Rukh Khan couldn't have made a better choice. The 'fearless' brand of cricket, that GG brought in with him and the team bonding that he developed was enough to put the Knights on a roll. And they rolled and rolled till they reached the top of the podium.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, May 26: Indian shuttler PV Sindhu blew away a massive 11-3 lead in the deciding game of the Malaysia Masters final against Wang Zhi Yi, missing out on a great opportunity to end her title drought here Sunday.

The trophy was well within her reach but World No. 15 Sindhu suffered a shocking meltdown after the final change of ends to go down 21-16, 5-21, 16-21 against the Chinese World No. 7 in 79 minutes.

"Overall, I can say that it's been a very good match. It's a bit disappointing, but a lot of positives to take from this match and the whole tournament as well," Sindhu said after the match.

"I am happy that I at least reached the final and I played well consistently. These matches will definitely give me a lot of confidence, but I could have won the match. It's just not one of those days," Sindhu added.

Sindhu used a combination of poise and power to dominate the proceedings against the reigning Asian champion Wang for most part of the match but all fell apart after the break in the decider as the trophy slipped out of her hands. Sindhu had lost to Wang at the Arctic Open last year but has defeated the Chinese twice in three meetings. Interestingly, it was Wang against whom Sindhu had won the final during her last BWF title at the Singapore Open.

The 28-year-old from Hyderabad, who now trains at the



Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy in Bangalore, looked in fine fettle this week but the loss against Wang from a winning position is something which she would look to address in the coming months.

The final lived up to the expectations as the two traded blows right from the start, looking to play at a high pace. Sindhu managed a 6-4 lead only for Wang to claw back with two points. At the interval Sindhu led 11-9. She quickly extended the lead to 17-10 with some angled returns, defensive lifts and trademark smashes. Even though Wang narrowed the gap to 16-19, Sindhu was always in control and closed the game when Wang hit long.

The second game was a forgettable affair for Sindhu, who struggled with the conditions and could manage only five points.

In the decider, Sindhu rediscovered her aggressive self as she went on to lead 11-3 at the interval. However, Wang scripted a sensational turnaround after the break as she won two punishing rallies, which included 55 and 56 shots. The Chinese did not look back as Sindhu committed a number of unforced errors after that.

SHORT TAKES

Winless streak for Indian eves continue

Antwerp: The Indian women's hockey team continued their winless streak in the Belgium leg of the FIH Pro League, slumping to 0-3 defeat against Argentina here Sunday. Celina Di Santo (first minute), Maria Campoy (39th) and Maria Granatto (47th) scored for Argentina in India's final match of the Belgium leg. The Argentina women completely dominated proceedings, rarely allowing their Indian counterparts to move forward. Once Argentina got the first goal in the opening minute, they held the Indians at bay for most part of the match. The only chance India got was midway into the first session, but Uditia's shot was palmed away by Argentina goalkeeper. The Indians got two penalty corners in the second half, but failed to utilise those.

Swimmer Nataraj bags silver in France

New Delhi: Ace India swimmer Srihari Nataraj has bagged a silver medal in the 50m backstroke event at the 30th Mare Nostrum swimming tour at the Canet-en-Roussillon, France, officials of the Swimming Federation of India informed here Sunday. Nataraj, who competed at the Tokyo Olympics, clocked 25.50s to claim the second spot on the podium behind Hungary's Adam Jaszó, who touched the pad at 25.46 seconds.

2-time PGA Tour winner dies at 30

New York: Two-time PGA Tour winner Grayson Murray died Saturday morning at age 30, one day after he withdrew from the Charles Schwab Cup Challenge at Colonial. There were no immediate details on the circumstances of his death, only shock and grief from the PGA Tour and his management team. "I am at a loss for words," PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said here in a release. "The PGA Tour is a family, and when you lose a member of your family, you are never the same. We mourn Grayson and pray for comfort for his loved ones."

Kroos bids adieu

Madrid: Real Madrid ended their La Liga campaign here Saturday night drawing 0-0 with Real Betis. It was also the last home game for their midfielder Toni Kroos. The 34-year-old midfielder announced earlier this week he will retire after playing for Germany at this summer's European Championship. "I couldn't have asked for more," Kroos said. "These have been 10 unforgettable years. Now the best way for me to finish would be winning another title (Champions League) with Madrid and then if possible lead Germany to victory in Euro 2024.

Dipa scripts history

1st Indian to win gold at Asian Senior meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tashkent, May 26: Top gymnast Dipa Karmakar became Sunday the first Indian to win a gold medal in the Asian Senior Championships as she clinched the yellow metal in the women's vault event here. The 30-year-old Dipa secured an average of 13.566 in the vault final on the last day of the competitions in Uzbekistan's capital city. North Koreans Kim Son Hyang (13.466) and Jo Kyong Byol (12.966) grabbed the silver and bronze medals respectively.

Dipa, who had finished fourth in the vault final at the 2016 Rio Olympics, had won a bronze medal in the same event in the 2015 edition.

Ashish Kumar had won a bronze medal in individual floor exercise in the 2015 Asian Championships. Pranati Nayak had also bagged a bronze each in the vault event in the 2019 and 2022 editions.

"History created at The Asian Gymnastics Championship. Inspirational, Dipa! Congratulations on the #Gold," Sports Authority of India (SAI) tweeted.

The gymnast from Tripura has also achieved another rare feat, a gold medal in vault at the 2018 FIG World Cup in Mersin, Turkey, becoming the first Indian to ever win a yellow metal at a global gymnastics event.



However, Dipa, who returned to action last year after a 21-month suspension for a doping offence, is out of contention for the upcoming Paris Olympics. She finished 16th in the all-round category with a score of 46.166 here Friday. The Asian Championship here is the final Olympic qualifier. Dipa had finished fourth in the vault final at the FIG Apparatus World Cup in Doha in April. Earlier, she had skipped the World Cup in Cottbus, Germany (February 22-25) after finishing fifth in Cairo (February 15-18) World Cup.

Chopra comes clean on injury

STAR JAVELIN THROWER CLARIFIES WHY HE OPTED OUT OF CZECH EVENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 26: Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra clarified Sunday that he is not injured but has pulled out of the 'Ostrava Golden Spike' athletics meet in the Czech Republic May 28 as a precautionary measure after he felt 'something' on his adductor muscles during a recent training session. Chopra said he did not want to risk injury in an Olympic year and hence decided to skip the prestigious meet.

"Following a recent throwing session, I decided not to compete in Ostrava as I felt something in my adductor. I have had problems with it in the past and pushing it at this stage can lead to injury," Chopra wrote on his Instagram page.

"Just to clarify, I am not injured but I don't want to take any risk during the Olympic year so had to take this decision. Once I feel it's fully recovered, I will get back to competitions," Chopra added.

Chopra's clarification came just hours after the organisers of the prestigious meet said he has decided to skip the event due to an injury he sustained while training two weeks ago.

"Due to an injury that he sustained in training two weeks ago (adductor muscle) he (Chopra) will not be able to throw



in Ostrava, but he will arrive at the event as a guest," the organisers of 'Golden Spike' said earlier in the day.

This was to be Chopra's first foray in a 'Golden Spike' meet, a world athletics continental tour gold level event, which is a going to see a star-studded field, with Tokyo Olympics silver medallist and 2023 World Championships bronze winner Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic and former World Champion Anderson Peters of Grenada set to be in action.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Deepika misses out on recurve medal

Yecheon, May 26: Deepika Kumari fell short of a successive Archery World Cup medal in her international comeback after becoming a mother, losing to World No. 2 Lim Sihyeon and No 3 Alejandra Valencia here Sunday.

Indian archers thus returned empty-handed in the Olympic discipline recurve category, while securing two medals (one gold and one silver) in the compound section of the World Cup Stage 2.

Lim, the rising 20-year-old from South Korea, prevailed 6-2 (28-26, 28-28, 28-27, 27-27) in the semifinal, notching back-to-back wins over the former World No. 1 Indian in less than a month.

Deepika, who had lost in straight sets to settle for a silver in the Shanghai World Cup last month, managed to put up some fight taking two points off Lim after drawing the second and fourth sets. But her three 8s, shooting in the red circle in the first, third and fourth sets cost Deepika dear as Lim sealed the match in four sets.

Fighting for a bronze, Deepika lost to Valencia 4-6 (26-29, 26-28, 28-25, 27-25, 26-29). Deepika continued her miserable run and shot four 8s in first six arrows to trail 0-4 against the Mexican.

May not be my last French Open: Rafa

AGENCIES

Paris, May 26: Fourteen-time French Open champion Rafa Nadal said there was still a chance this year's tournament here may not be his last, in comments ahead of his tough opener against fourth seed Alexander Zverev. The Spaniard, who turns 38 next month, skipped last year's tournament due to a hip injury that needed surgery and has said he expects to retire at the end of 2024.

However, Nadal wasn't ready to repeat those words Saturday. "If I have to tell you it's 100 per cent my last Roland Garros, sorry but I will not, because I cannot predict what's going on. I hope you understand," Nadal told a packed press conference.

"I don't want to close 100 per cent the door, because it's a very simple thing. First, I'm enjoying playing tennis," he said and added that he was 'more or less healthy and playing without limitation'. "Maybe in one month and a half I'll say 'OK, it's enough, I can't keep going'. But today I cannot guarantee that it's (French



Open) going to be the last one," the Spaniard stated.

"I'm feeling better. That's the truth. Not because I'm here," Nadal said, appearing more cheerful than he has in recent months. "Probably because we did things to try to feel better and we have been working without a stop to keep going with the process, to try to arrive here in a proper way," he added.

Nadal turned his attention to Monday's clash with Zverev, a rematch of the 2022 semifinal when the German retired after an ankle injury. "It's a super-tough first round. Maybe I go there and I repeat the disaster of Rome. It's a possibility. I don't want to hide that," Nadal said, referring to a second round defeat by Hubert Hurkacz in the Italian capital this month.

"I don't want to close the door 100% because I am still enjoying playing tennis. I cannot predict the future also"

RAFA NADAL

"But in my mind is something different, play much better and give myself a chance to be competitive... I didn't play this level of opponents, being competitive since a super-long time. So all these questions I understand that you're making to me I'm asking to myself too. But is the answer going to be on Monday, no? That's it," Nadal said.

"The rest of the things are just talking and talking, and in the end don't matter. It's about my feelings and my feelings are better. I want to enjoy that match," he asserted.

Mbappe leaves PSG with 'head held high'

AGENCIES

Paris, May 26: Kylian Mbappe said he was proud to leave Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) with his 'head held high' after winning Saturday's French Cup final, but said he would wait for the right time to confirm where he will be playing next season. "To finish with a trophy in a final, there is no better way. It feels really good," Mbappe told reporters after PSG beat Lyon 2-1.

Mbappe's contract is now up and he recently confirmed he would leave at the season's end, with Real Madrid expected to be his next destination, even if neither he nor the Spanish giants have made any announcement. "All I wanted was to end things well with my club, with a trophy. I think there is a time for everything and I will announce my future club in good time," Mbappe stated.

"I think it will be in a few days so there is no problem. There are still some details (to be sorted



out) but the most important thing was to finish on a high here," added Mbappe, who will team up in the coming days with the France squad to prepare for Euro 2024, added.

Mbappe did not score in Saturday's game and so leaves his hometown team with a club-record tally of 256 goals from 308 appearances.

Mbappe joined PSG from Monaco in August 2017 in a stunning 180-million-euro deal and departs after winning six Ligue 1 titles, four French Cups and two League Cups, as well as helping his team reach the Champions League final in 2020.

"There are only good memories and now I can go out with my head held high," he said.