

Beauty with a purpose
Aditi Rao Hydari says her Cannes outing was an opportunity to redefine beauty standards and celebrate inclusivity on a global stage

LEISURE | P2

Ops end in north Gaza
Israeli forces end operations in north Gaza's Jabalia after days of intense fighting and over 200 airstrikes, while probing further into Rafah

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Markets rebound
Stock markets snap the five-day losing run Friday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 75 points on value-buying

BUSINESS | P11

Stress on consistency
Skipper of the hockey team Harmanpreet Singh says consistency can help India win an Olympic medal in Paris

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SHORT TAKES

Prajwal remanded to police custody

Bangalore: A court here Friday remanded the suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna to police custody till June 6. The Hassan MP, facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, was arrested by the Special Investigation Team in the wee hours of Friday after his arrival from Germany. He was produced before the court after the medical examination at the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital. The 42nd Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate KN Shivakumar heard the remand application and objection argument from Prajwal's advocate and remanded him to police custody. Special Public Prosecutor Ashok Naik argued on behalf of SIT and sought 14 days of police custody. Prajwal's advocate Arun G said there were no rape charges in the initial FIR filed against his client until May 5 and police custody is not recommended. Naik objected to this and said there were several pieces of evidence against Prajwal.

Puri cracker blast toll mounts to 6

Puri: The death toll in the firecracker explosion in Puri mounted to six Friday while 24 injured persons are undergoing treatment, a statement issued by the office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) read. Three persons, including a minor, had died and 33 others were injured after a stockpile of firecrackers exploded during Lord Jagannath's Chandan Jatra in Puri Wednesday evening. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has ordered an administrative-level inquiry into the incident and announced ex-gratia of ₹4 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased. "The Collector, Puri has already taken steps for payment of ₹4 lakh each towards ex-gratia assistance to the next of kin of four deceased persons," another SRC statement said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



MARKET WATCH

INDEX	SENSEX	73961.31	↑	75.71
	NIFTY	22530.70	↑	42.05
	DOLLAR	85.20	↑	₹2.07
	EURO	90.53	↑	₹0.30
	GOLD	₹71,801	↓	₹95
	SILVER	₹91,648	↓	₹2.47

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	34.0°C	35.0°C
Min Temp	30.0°C	29.5°C
Humidity	86%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
PARTLY CLOUDY SKY



HOMAGE TO SUN: Prime Minister Narendra Modi performs 'Surya Puja' at Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanniyakumari, Friday

GDP grows at 8.2% in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: India's economy grew by 8.2 per cent in the fiscal year that ended in March, cementing the country's position as the fastest-growing major economy in the world. GDP growth was 7 per cent in the previous 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023) fiscal, according to Statistics Ministry data. The Reserve Bank of India has forecast that the economy will expand by 7 per cent in the current fiscal year, outpacing global growth that's forecast to reach 3 per cent in 2024. Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the FY24 growth rate as just a trailer of things to come. "The Q4 GDP growth data for 2023-24 shows robust momentum in our economy which is poised to further accelerate. Thanks to the hardworking people of our country, 8.2% growth for the year 2023-24 exemplifies that India continues to be the fastest growing major economy globally." The growth is mainly driven by good showing by the manufacturing sector, though the farm sector recorded deceleration during the fiscal as well as fourth quarter (January-March 2024). According to the data, India's economy recorded 7.8 per cent in the January-March period, the slowest in the four quarters of FY24. It was 8.6 per cent in October-December 2023, 8.1 per cent in July-September 2023 and 8.2 per cent in April-June 2023.

Final phase today

In the final leg of the seven-phase general elections, 75 seats across seven states and the Union Territory of Chandigarh will go to the polls Saturday. Prominent candidates in the fray are Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Anurag Thakur, Congress' Srikant Jena, BJP's Baijayant 'Jay' Panda and RJD's Misa Bharti. In Odisha, where Parliamentary and Assembly polls are being held simultaneously, six Lok Sabha constituencies - Kendrapara, Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur and Jajpur - and 42 Assembly segments under them are going to the polls. Some of the key candidates for Assembly polls are Pratap Deb, Pramila Mallik, Atanu S Nayak, Akash Das Nayak and Arindam Roy

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, May 31: Fifty-seven seats across seven states and the Union Territory of Chandigarh will go to polls in the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections Saturday that include Varanasi, from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term. In Odisha, where Lok Sabha and Assembly polls are being held simultaneously, over 99.61 lakh voters will decide the fate of 460 candidates in six Lok Sabha seats and 42 Assembly segments in the coastal region amid prevailing hot and humid weather conditions, officials said. A straight fight is expected between the ruling BJD and the

persons are eligible to cast their votes in 10,882 polling booths. In view of hot and humid conditions, special arrangements have been made at polling stations to provide essentials to voters, Odisha's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) NB Dhal said. DGP Arun Kumar Sarangi said 36,000 security personnel, including 125 companies of central forces, have been deployed across the six constituencies. About 2,280 polling booths have been identified as critical, necessitating the deployment of central forces to ensure free and fair elections. Key candidates in this phase include Odisha Assembly Speaker Pramila Mallik, Government Chief Whip Prashant Kumar Mudili, and half-a-dozen Odisha ministers Sudam Marndi, Ashwini Patra, Pritiranjan Ghadai, Atanu S Nayak, Pratap Deb and TK Behera. Also, four sitting MPs - Pratap Sarangi (Balasore), Manjula Mandal (Bhadrak), Sarmistha Sethi (Jajpur) and Rajashree Mallick (Jagatsinghpur) - are in the fray in their respective seats. While BJD state president

Stay indoors from 11am to 3pm: Govt

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 31: With temperatures hovering above 42 degrees Celsius in 13 different locations across Odisha coupled with high humidity levels, the state government Friday advised people to remain indoors from 11am to 3pm for the next three days. According to the IMD's Bhubaneswar centre, Titilagarh town registered the highest temperature in the state at 46.5 degrees Celsius, followed by Bolangir (46.4), Sonepur (46.2) and Bargarh (46). Bhubaneswar and Cuttack cities recorded relatively normal temperatures of 34 and 35 degrees Celsius during the day. However, the humidity levels remained high, ranging from 74 to 86 per cent in the twin cities, officials said. Manorama Mohanty, director of Bhubaneswar meteorological centre, said heatwave to severe heatwave conditions, along with warm nights, are expected to persist in many districts of the state over the next three days.



Three other towns in western Odisha, namely Jharsuguda, Bhawanipatna, and Nuapada, also experienced scorching temperatures of 45 degrees Celsius each. The maximum tempera-

State confirms 5 sunstroke deaths

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government Friday confirmed the deaths of five persons due to sunstroke so far, while an inquiry into 18 more casualties suspected to be linked to heat-related illness is currently underway. According to Satyabrata Sahu, Odisha's Special Relief Commissioner (SRC), one death each has been confirmed in Balasore, Dhenkanal, Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, and Bolangir.

Trump first former US President to be convicted of felony

New York/Washington, May 31: Donald Trump has become the first former US President to be convicted of a felony after a grand jury in New York found him guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a payment to silence a porn star ahead of the 2016 presidential election, mounting his legal challenges amidst his bid to return to the White House in November. In a historic verdict, a panel of 12 Manhattan jurors Thursday said that Trump, 77, falsified business records to conceal a \$130,000 hush money payment to adult



film star Stormy Daniels to influence the 2016 contest. The decision came after about a day and a half of deliberations. The conviction does not prevent Trump from standing in November's election, but he is almost certain to appeal against it regardless. Over a six-week trial, the court heard from 22 witnesses, including Daniels, whose alleged sexual encounter with the former President was at the centre of the case. As the verdicts were read, Trump remained silent and still. But the former President spoke to reporters outside the courtroom, calling the trial a 'rigged, disgraceful trial' and saying that the 'real verdict' will be rendered on Election Day. Prosecutors had argued that, by approving a scheme to disguise

the money as legal expenses, Trump broke election law. Trump's sentencing is scheduled for July 11, four days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he will be formally nominated as the party's presidential candidate against incumbent Joe Biden, an 81-year-old Democrat, in the November 5 elections. For now, Trump has been released without having to pay bail. "This was a disgrace. This was a rigged trial by a conflicted judge who was corrupt. It's a rigged trial, a disgrace. They wouldn't give us a venue change. We were at 5 per cent or 6 per cent in this district, in this area. This was a rigged, disgraceful trial," said Trump shortly after the verdict was read. "The real verdict is going to be November 5th by the people. And they know what happened here, and everybody knows what happened here. You have a Soros-backed DA, and the whole thing, we didn't do a thing wrong. I'm a very innocent man, and it's okay, I'm fighting for our country. I'm fighting for our Constitution. Our whole country is being rigged right now," Trump said. Trump alleged that this was done by the Biden administration to wound or hurt a political opponent. "And I think it's just a disgrace. And we'll keep fighting. We'll fight till the end, and we'll win because our country has gone to hell," he said.

leisure



LONG-DISTANCE MARRIAGE A HELL: LEIGH-ANNE PINNOCK

English singer Leigh-Anne Pinnock says long-distance marriage is a hell. Appearing on the *Table Manners* podcast, Leigh-Anne said: "My husband plays football in Saudi. So for the last two years we have been seeing each other for two days a month. It's been hell to be honest."

BEBE REXHA ON HER STRUGGLES WITH PCOS

Diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) last year, singer Bebe Rexha has now opened up about her symptoms to her followers on social media. Rexha shared that she has been struggling with painful cysts, acne, and weight gain due to PCOS.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You may be alone, but not necessarily lonely. You may want to listen to your inner voice, and express your true self creatively. Spend the evening with a loved one who can hear the music in your silence too, suggests Ganesh.

TAURUS
Today, you may experience the juxtaposition of pleasure and pain. Household tasks may weigh you down around afternoon. Later in the day, you will be able to achieve whatever you desire solely on account of your determination and mental strength. Pleasure awaits in the warmth and company of your soul mate, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
If you are into retail business, planetary positions indicate today is a day for bumper sales. You will set records in making profits. After work, you may want to take your beloved out shopping. Though it may burn a hole in your pocket, the returns you get once you reach home will be worth every penny!

CANCER
Ganesh says that you will carve out your path for progress. You will get respect and recognition from people. Business rivals and illness may bother you. Beware of enemies' actions. Your alertness will thwart their designs.

LEO
You will get good co-operation from your colleagues and subordinates. In your personal life also you will gain the support of your spouse and your friends. Other people will be accommodating of your problems and will try to solve them for you. Your expenses may increase, leading to some financial worries, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
An easy-going day full of fun and light moments will help you vent all that pressure built up inside you. Ganesh predicts a progressive and profitable day for you. Expect to honour invitations to social events or even parties.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you will try to enhance your skill regarding new technological inventions and will want to learn about the same in your spare time. Ganesh says that if you wish to gain success you need to first leave your ego behind. Only then will you be able to stride ahead on the path to progress.

SCORPIO
Don't put off cultivating healthy eating habits, says Ganesh. You should do better to control over-indulging in food as it may lead to obesity. Ganesh advises you to stick to a healthy lifestyle, especially when it comes to meals.

SAGITTARIUS
Life is bubbling within you and you shall be in a hyper-elevated state of bliss today. Your high-spirits and energy will inspire you to perform at your best. Moreover, your inner voice will be loud and bellowing. Make the most of this superb day, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Things may just fall in to your lap today. You will help those in need but will get extremely upset when the outcome is not as per your expectations, feels Ganesh. It is not an encouraging sight and it will affect your confidence adversely.

AQUARIUS
You want to spread peace and joy all around, and today you may achieve that. You, however, may have to sacrifice your own preferences and interests to ensure that the problems get solved.

PISCES
Take one cautious step at a time today, says Ganesh. You will discuss intimate matters at home and official matters at work but be careful about whom you trust and deception from someone close might lead to worry and stress in the future. Even though you are an emotional person, lay onus on working with your head over your heart today as people might try to take advantage of your nature and step on your shoulder, feels Ganesh.

No taker for Janhvi's joke on intimacy

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor's highly anticipated film, *Mr & Mrs Mahi*, is out now. Meanwhile, a video of the Dhadak actress attempting stand-up comedy is going viral on Reddit.

In the video, she humorously talks about dating and warns about the potential spread of HPV through unprotected intimacy after a date.

Janhvi expressed a desire for more meaningful information, saying that instead of being told about no-makeup looks, she wanted tips that could potentially save her life. She mentioned that instead of red flags, people should talk about the Red Cross.

While a date might go well, she questioned what precautions should be taken if it does. She explained that HPV is a virus that spreads through intimate skin-to-skin contact, emphasizing that this doesn't mean handshakes or cheek pulls, but rather really intimate contact.

It seems the users on Reddit were not impressed with the performance, finding it bland. One comment stated, "Someone wrote that up for her. And STILL ... so dull. Are we supposed to laugh now?" Another comment read, "How is any of those sentences funny? It's so boring and bland."

AGENCIES



Aditi's empowering Cannes experience

Mumbai: Aditi Rao Hydari had a fashionable outing at the recently-concluded Cannes film festival, but the actor feels it had a deeper purpose. The actor says it was more of an opportunity to redefine beauty standards and celebrate inclusivity on a global stage.

In her first interview after coming back from the Cannes film festival, the *Heeramandi* actress looks back at her experience, recalling her own struggle to find a way towards self-ac-

ceptance and confidence. Aditi went to the Cannes film festival as a brand ambassador for the French cosmetic label, L'Oreal Paris.

"Representing India at the Cannes Film Festival is an immense honour and a moment of pride for me. Watching the icons walking the red carpet, the awards, and the fashion have always inspired me. So, to be a part of it myself is surreal to me. Cannes is not just a celebration of global cinema, but also a platform where diverse cultures and stories come together," Aditi shared.

This was the third year Aditi was at the international film festival. She asserts that representing the cosmetic brand at the fest was 'incredibly empowering'.

"It reaffirmed my belief in the importance of self-worth and the power of our voices. By being at Cannes, I hope to inspire other women to pursue their dreams and to recognise that they too can live their dreams, belong and own their worth in the world," says the actress.

AGENCIES



Priyanka shows her spiritual inclination

Mumbai: After a short break, Priyanka Chopra, the quintessential desi girl, has begun work on her next project, *The Bluff*. The actor shared a glimpse of the script on her Instagram stories, but what caught our attention was how she wrote Om on the cover page.

Priyanka took to Instagram stories to share that she has begun work on her next film. "It begins," she wrote, sharing a picture of the script of *The Bluff*, directed by Frank E Flowers of Bob Marley: One Love-fame. In orange pen, she wrote Om on the top of the cover page, which caught netizen's attention.

Set in the 19th-century Caribbean, *The Bluff* follows the story of a former pirate, essayed by Priyanka.

Her character embarks on a journey to protect her family when the secrets of her past catch up with her. Shooting for the film will resume soon.

The movie is produced by AGBO's Anthony Russo, Joe Russo, Angela Russo-Otstot, and Michael Disco.

AGENCIES



MALAIKA- ARJUN BREAKUP 'Relationship ran its course'

Mumbai: Malaika Arora and Arjun Kapoor have always been in the news for their romantic getaways and dinner dates. The duo has set major couple goals by being vocal about their relationship despite being public figures. However, recently a Pinkvilla report has claimed that Malaika-Arjun have mutually parted ways.

The report attributed the news to a source and said, "Malaika and Arjun had a very special relationship and both of them will continue to hold a special place in each others hearts. They have chosen to part ways and will maintain a dignified silence in this matter. They won't allow anyone to drag and dissect their relationship."

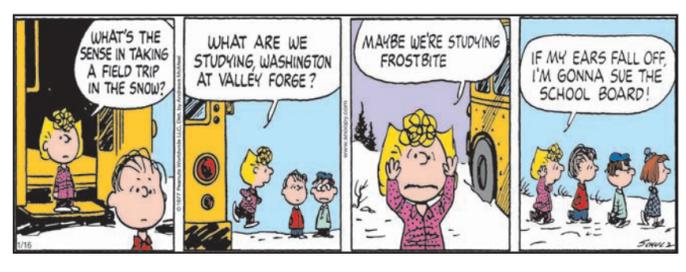
It further added, "They had a long, loving, fruitful relationship that has unfortunately run its course now. That doesn't mean there is any bad blood between them. They respect each other hugely and have been a pillar of strength for each other. Over the years, they have given their relationship a lot of respect. They will continue to give each other the same respect despite them deciding to part ways. Both of them were in a serious relationship for years, and they expect people to be gracious enough to give them space at this emotional time."

For the unversed, Malaika and Arjun were rumoured to be dating since a long time.

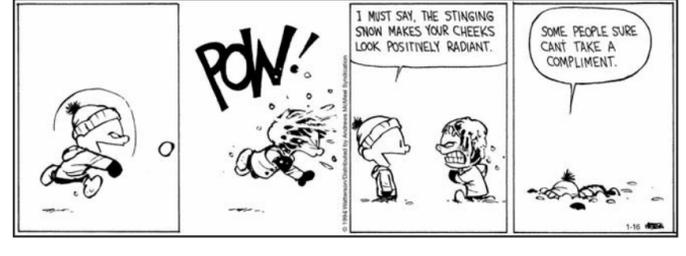
The couple made their relationship official in 2018 on Malaika's 45th birthday. Malaika was earlier married to Arbaaz Khan. The ex-couple have a son named Arhaan who lives with Malaika.

AGENCIES

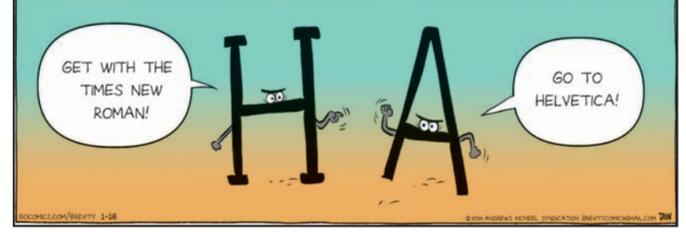
PEANUTS



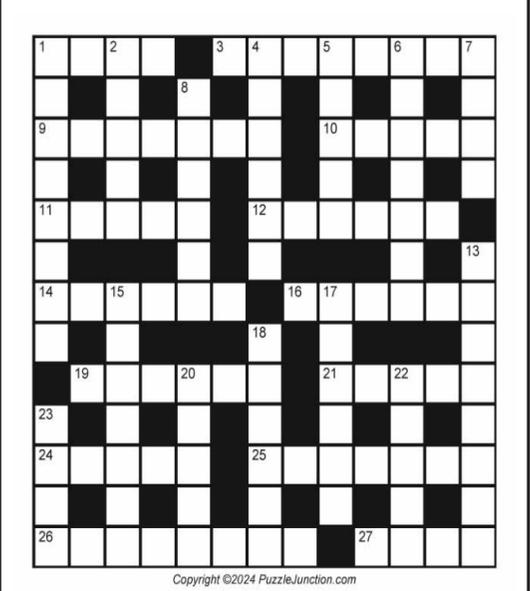
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Farm sound
 - 3 Cooking utensil
 - 9 Knuckle under
 - 10 Actor's line
 - 11 Inhabit
 - 12 Support, as a decision
 - 14 Anticipates
 - 16 Clean house (4,2)
 - 19 Exaggerate
 - 21 Length unit
 - 24 Blood line
 - 25 Mutilated
 - 26 One with the flock
 - 27 Hightailed it
 - 6 Colourful fabric
 - 7 Grant basis
 - 8 Type of train
 - 13 Awesome!
 - 15 Hostile
 - 17 Kind of system extension
 - 18 Gabled
 - 20 Get through to
 - 22 Garden bulb
 - 23 Bridge option
- Down**
- 1 Volcanic glass
 - 2 Mother-of-pearl
 - 4 Vine holder
 - 5 Conflict

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



A group of young dancers performs during 'Sabitree Mahotsav' at Bhanjakala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Friday

downtown

Stay ready for heat-related cases, govt tells hospitals

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 31: The state government Friday directed health facilities at different levels to stay in total readiness for dealing with heat-related cases.

The direction came in light of rising temperatures throughout the state, along with very hot and humid conditions, and the reported deaths of 16 people in Sundargarh and Jharsuguda districts reportedly due to the heatwave Thursday.

Reports indicate that the entire western Odisha has virtually turned into a boiling cauldron, with day temperature rising above 45 to 47 degrees Celsius. As many as eight locations in Western Odisha alone Friday reported day temperature above 45 degrees Celsius.

Health and Family Welfare Commissioner-cum-Secretary Shalini Pandit, in a special guideline, instructed all medical colleges and hospitals, sub-divisional hospitals, community health centres, and district headquarters hospitals to scrupulously ensure all preparedness in line with the National Action Plan on Heat-Related illnesses and the State Action Plan on Heat-Related Illness.

She directed for proper management of heat-related cases, surveillance, and proactive measures to mitigate the chances of morbidity. As per the guidelines, all healthcare facilities are to ensure logis-



to meet the exigencies.

Health facility preparedness must be reviewed regarding the availability of earmarked beds, adequate quantities of essential medicines, intravenous fluids, ice packs, ORS, and all necessary equipment to provide active, emergency medical care with an uninterrupted power supply, she said.

Pandit said that guidance on developing heatstroke rooms and the emergency management of severe heat-related illnesses has been disseminated.

The availability of sufficient drinking water at all health facilities and the continued functioning of cooling appliances in critical areas must be ensured.

The officials were asked to undertake proper investigations of suspected heat-related illness (HRI) deaths as per the National Action Plan to understand the circumstances around suspected HRI deaths.

The letter stated that the post-mortem of all suspected HRI

deaths must be conducted, and information regarding the deaths should be submitted to the government immediately.

"Confirmed deaths would be notified by the SRC/Collector of the district, and efforts should be made for sensitisation and capacity building of medical officers, health staff, and grassroots level workers on heat illness, its early recognition, and management," she said.

Pandit said the districts may also utilise Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) as well as community-level awareness materials developed by NPCCHH and Director, SIHFW regarding the precautions to be taken by people to safeguard themselves against the heatwave.

She said all suspected heat-related death cases must be investigated by the local medical officer and the revenue officer jointly, as per the SRC guidelines.

Meanwhile, the IMD has issued a heatwave warning for several districts including Bolangir, Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Sonepur, Nuapada, Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Boudh, and Kandhamal for Saturday.

Additionally, hot and humid weather conditions are anticipated in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, and Keonjhar districts June 1.

Naveen visits bookstore after hectic campaign

POST NEWS NETWORK

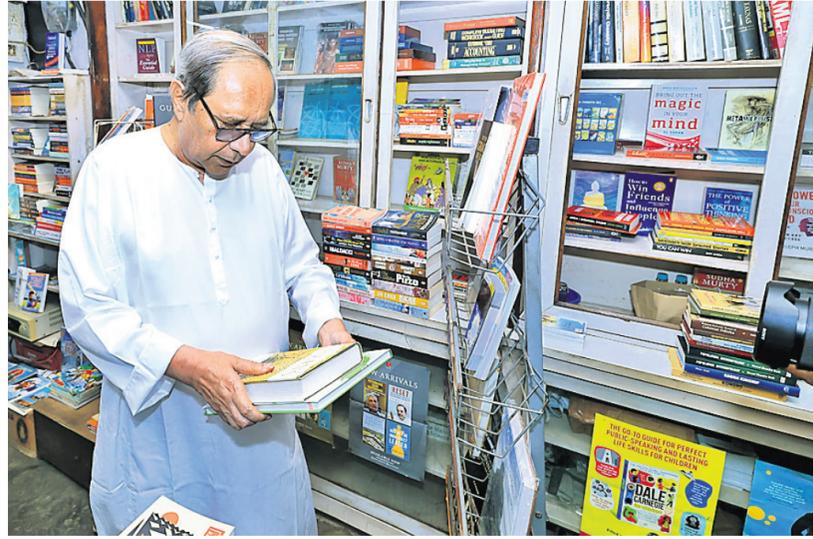
Bhubaneswar, May 31: After a hectic campaign, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was seen in a relaxed mood buying books at the Modern Book Depot in Master Canteen area, here, Friday.

Speaking to reporters, the CM said that after the election campaigning he wanted to relax. "So I have come to this bookstore and bought some books. I am eager to read the book, 'Secrets of Similipal'," Naveen said.

It is worth mentioning that Naveen, a writer himself, has authored three books - 'The Garden of Life', 'A Second Paradise' and 'Desert Kingdom'.

The book 'Secrets of Similipal', written by Debabrata Swain, incorporates many new aspects enumerating factors that pose grave threat to the precious ecosystem of the forests and discusses ways to overcome those.

Enriched with tell-tale photographs, the author who has a



long and lingering association with Similipal, and experiences

as head of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, de-

scribes different facets of this wonderland lucidly.

Tight security for polls today

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 31: Around 36,000 security personnel will be deployed for the fourth and last phase of simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in the state Saturday, a senior police officer said.

A total of 126 companies of central armed police forces (CAPFs) and 86 platoons of Odisha Armed Police Force are among the 36,000 personnel.

Six Lok Sabha constituencies - Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur - along with 42 Assembly segments in the coastal region will go to polls Saturday.

"Voting will be held at 10,882 polling booths at 8,752 locations in nine districts of Odisha Saturday. At least 21 per cent of the total booths have been identified as sensitive or critical booths, and CAPFs will be deployed in the sensitive booths," DGP Arun Sarangi said here Friday.

As minor incidents of pre-poll violence have been reported in the politically sensitive coastal region, the police are fully prepared to ensure smooth conduct of elections, Sarangi said.

He said four young IPS officers of SDPO rank will be deployed in Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Mayurbhanj, Bhadrak and Balasore districts, while 42 assembly supervising officers in the rank of additional SP will also be mobilised. Sarangi said 84 DSPs will supervise the law and order (two for each assembly segment), while 199 sector officers in the rank of inspector will also be deployed for poll duty.

Central paramilitary forces will be deployed in 2,280 critical and vulnerable booths, he said. Besides, 843 mobile parties, 255 flying squads and 255 static surveillance teams will be deployed for the elections, he said.

The DGP said 21 inter-state border check posts with CCTV surveillance and 60 intra-state border check posts have been set up to check illegal flow of cash, arms, liquor and other substances.

A total of 36 election related cases have been registered in the districts going to polls Saturday and action has been taken against 49 accused persons, he added.

Over 10cr to vote for 57 seats

LAST PHASE POLLS TODAY



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi/Chandigarh, May 31: Fifty-seven seats across seven states and the Union Territory (UT) of Chandigarh will go to polls in the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections Saturday, that include Varanasi from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term.

Polling is scheduled in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three seats in Jharkhand besides Chandigarh. Polling for the remaining 42 Assembly constituencies of Odisha and bypolls to six Assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh will also take place simultaneously.

Other prominent candidates among the total 904 contestants in fray are Union minister Anurag Thakur, Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, Lalu Prasad's daughter Misa Bharti and actor Kangana Ranaut.

Over 10.06 crore citizens, including nearly 5.24 crore men, 4.82 crore women and 3,574 third gender electors are eligible to vote in this phase.

Saturday's voting will mark the end to the marathon polling process that began April 19 and has already covered 486 Lok Sabha seats in 28 states and UTs. The Assemblies of Andhra

Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim also went to polls. Counting of votes will be taken up, June 4. According to Election Commission guidelines, television channels and news outlets will be able to run exit poll data and its results June 1 after 6.30 pm. The EC said polling parties have been dispatched along with machines and poll materials to their respective polling stations.

At the 1.09 lakh polling stations, basic facilities including ample shade, drinking water, ramps, and toilets are being provided to ensure that polling takes place in a comfortable and secure environment, it said.

The poll panel has also directed CEOs and state machineries to take adequate measures to manage the adverse impact of hot weather or rainfall wherever predicted.

The commission called upon voters to turn out in greater numbers and vote with responsibility and pride. The turnout in the first six phases was 66.14 per cent, 66.71, 65.68, 69.16, 62.2 and 63.36 per cent respectively.

The campaigning for the last phase which ended Thursday evening saw BJP leaders led by Modi accusing the Congress and the INDIA alliance of being corrupt, anti-Hindu and engaging in loot, appeasement and dynastic politics.

The Opposition parties have been claiming that the BJP is anti-farmer, anti-youth and will

change and scrap the Constitution if they win the elections. On Thursday evening, Modi headed to Kanyakumari where he is meditating till June 1 at the site associated with Swami Vivekananda. Modi had 206 public outreach programmes, including rallies and roadshows, since the Election Commission announced the Lok Sabha election schedule March 16.

The parliamentary seats where polling will take place in Uttar Pradesh are Maharajganj, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Deoria, Bangaon (SC), Ghosi, Salempur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Mirzapur and Robertsganj (SC), spread across 11 districts.

Uttar Pradesh is a seeing a direct contest between the BJP-led NDA and the coalition of INDIA bloc members Samajwadi Party and Congress.

From Chandauli, Maharajganj and Mirzapur, Union ministers Mahendra Nath Pandey, Pankaj Chaudhary and Anupriya Patel respectively are contesting. Late Mukhtar Ansari's brother Afzal Ansari is in the fray from Ghazipur and former prime minister Chandrashekhar's son Neeraj Shekhar is contesting from Ballia. In Varanasi, those contesting against Modi are Ajay Rai (Congress), Ather Jamal Lari (BSP), Kolisetty Shiva Kumar (Yuga Thulasi Party), Gagan Prakash Yadav, (Apna Dal, Kameravadi), and independents Dinesh Kumar Yadav and Sanjay Kumar Tiwari.

The polls in South Bengal, a traditional TMC stronghold, will test the party's dominance amid an 'old versus new' power struggle, with the national spotlight on Sandeshkhali in Basirhat due to allegations of atrocities on women and land grabs.

The seventh phase will cover Dum Dum, Barasat, Basirhat, Jayanagar, Mathurapur, Diamond Harbour, Jadavpur, Kolkata Dakshin, and Kolkata Uttar, where the TMC secured victories in the 2019 elections.

TMC heavyweight Abhishek Banerjee, considered the party's de facto number two, is contesting from Diamond Harbour. Banerjee's performance in this seat, which the TMC touts as a 'model constituency', will be closely watched as the Opposition attempts to paint it as a 'laboratory of violence'. The two-time MP faces CPI (M)'s Pratikur Rahaman and BJP's Abhijit Das in a three-way contest.

'Tunguru Bhola' among 11 held for stealing pipes

DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 31: The twin city Commissionerate Police Friday busted an interstate water pipe robber gang with the arrest of 11 of its members including Alok Bhola.

It is worth mentioning Alok alias Tunguru, an auto-rickshaw driver, had created a sensation in the state sometime back after the dramatic details of his relationship with a married woman went viral, leading to his arrest.

The accused were identified as Ramesh Chandra Sahu, 52, Sandip Kumar Agrawal, 45, Alok

Bhola, 25, SK Rahim, 37, Papu Bhuyana, 21, Srikanta Maharana, 23, Rajkumar Parida, 32, Sudhir Behera, 34, Bhagirathi Nayak, 21, Kartik Chandra Subudhi, 34 and Rasmiranjan Dash, 29.

Addressing media, City deputy commissioner of police (DCP) Prateek Singh said ₹20,000 in cash, an auto-rickshaw, a motorcycle and 10 mobile phones have been seized from the possession of the accused.

The accused, in the past, have been booked for eight times by police in districts such as Kandhamal, Ganjam, Khurda, Cuttack and Ganjam, said the

DCP, adding that four members of the gang are still at large.

About the modus operandi, the DCP said the mastermind Sudhir hired associates on a contract-basis who were tasked to recon sites where the authorities laid water supply pipes for various projects. Several lorry drivers were also hired on a part-time basis by Sudhir to deliver these pipes to dealers in Raipur, Bhilail and other places. In order to make it appear authentic, he created forged documents of the pipes, Singh added.

The accused have been booked under Section 379 of the IPC.



AT LORD'S SERVICE: Maharana servitors busy constructing chariots at Rath Yard in Puri, Friday PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

CJ plays Good Samaritan

New Delhi: At a time when it's hot enough to scald a lizard, cucumber-cool Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud is playing a good samaritan to birds and small animals thirsting for water. Vessels filled with water and food grains have been placed strategically on the Supreme Court premises so the thirsty and hungry birds and small animals like squirrel could have some respite from the blistering heat. Justice Chandrachud personally identified the places where these are placed, an apex court official said. He also directed the officials to ensure constant supply of water and food at these places. These bowls may be just a drop in the ocean but contain an ocean of compassion.

How China-based accounts manipulated social media

ACCORDING TO MICROSOFT, CHINA IS USING FAKE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS TO POLL VOTERS ON WHAT DIVIDES THEM MOST TO SOW DIVISION AND POSSIBLY INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 31: From criticising the Indian government to supporting the Khalistan independence movement, China-based 'bad actors' that were busy manipulating the social media by using synthetic content, including the misuse of artificial intelligence (AI), have now been exposed.

The network originated in China and targeted the global Sikh community, including in Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, the UK and

Nigeria. According to Meta (formerly Facebook), these social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and X (formerly Twitter) posted primarily in English and Hindi about news and current events, including images likely manipulated by photo-editing tools or generated by AI.

These accounts frequently posted about floods in the Punjab region, the Sikh community worldwide, "the Khalistan independence movement, the assassination of Hardeep Singh

Nijjar, a pro-Khalistan independence activist in Canada and criticism of the Indian government".

Meta swung into action and removed 37 Facebook accounts, 13 Pages, five Groups, and nine accounts on Instagram for violating its policy against coordinated inauthentic behaviour (CIB).

This activity included several clusters of fake accounts, including one with links to an "un-attributed CIB network from China targeting India and the

Tibet region that we disrupted in early 2023".

Some of these clusters amplified one another with most of their engagement coming from their own fake accounts.

Meta said that this operation used compromised and fake accounts to pose as Sikhs, post content and manage Pages and Groups. They created a fictitious activist movement called "Operation K" which called for pro-Sikh protests, including in New Zealand and Australia. The company said it removed

this activity before it was able to build an audience among authentic communities on its platforms.

Not just Meta, a Microsoft Threat Analysis team warned last month that China will create and amplify AI-generated content to benefit its interests amid major global elections, particularly in India and the US.

According to Microsoft, China is using fake social media accounts to poll voters on what divides them most to sow division and possibly influence the outcome of the elections.

Cong to skip exit poll debates

BJP CALLS IT 'UNEQUIVOCAL CONFIRMATION' OF CONCEDED



The decision was taken after consultations within the party, the sources said.

However, BJP president J P Nadda claimed that the Congress' decision to not participate in exit poll debates amounts to an 'unequivocal confirmation' that the opposition party has conceded the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

In a post on X, he asked voters not to waste their votes in the seventh and last phase of the polls Saturday as the Congress usually opts out when it doesn't expect favourable results but has no compunction showing up if it thinks it has even an outside chance.

"Their hypocrisy is not lost on anyone. Let no one in Phase 7 waste their vote on them," he said.

Nadda alleged, instead of focusing on winning the election, the opposition party repeatedly approached the Supreme Court, making outrageous demands, in order to 'mutilate' the well-established electoral process.

"The results will be out on 4th June. Prior to that, we do not see any reason to indulge in speculation and slugfest for TRP," he said in a statement shared on X.

"The Indian National Congress will not participate in the debates on Exit Polls. The purpose of any debate should be to inform the people. We will happily partake in debates from 4th June onwards," Kherra said in a statement.

New Delhi, May 31: The Congress has decided not to participate in any Lok Sabha exit poll debates on the television channels and said it does not want to indulge in speculation and slugfest for TRP.

Congress spokesperson and media department chairperson Pawan Kherra said the voters have cast their votes and their verdict has been secured.

PV Sindhu appointed brand ambassador for tobacco control



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra Friday reiterated India's commitment to safeguarding current and future generations from the health, social, environmental, and economic harms associated with tobacco.

The Union health ministry organised an event Friday to observe the 'World No Tobacco Day 2024'.

In a video message, Sindhu urged everyone to unite in the campaign against tobacco use, encouraging individuals to lead a tobacco-free life.

This year's theme, "Protecting Children from Tobacco Industry Interference" underscores the urgent need to shield youths from the detrimental influences of tobacco consumption.

Chandra addressed the event through a video message, and emphasised the government's "proactive stance", implementing measures across various levels - local, national, regional, and global to reduce tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke, thereby fostering healthier communities.

Speaking on the occasion, he highlighted how India's enforcement of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control has yielded 'noticeable results', citing tangible outcomes evidenced by the tobacco surveillance and monitoring mechanisms in place.

To motivate young children and the youth to steer clear of tobacco, badminton player PV Sindhu Friday designated as the brand ambassador for Tobacco Control.

In a video message, Sindhu urged everyone to unite in the campaign against tobacco use, encouraging individuals to lead a tobacco-free life.

STF destroys contraband

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 31: The STF of Odisha Police in presence of scientific officers of State Forensic Science Laboratory and members of State Pollution Control Board destroyed a bulk quantity of contraband ganja and brown sugar, Friday.

STF sources here said a total of 147kg and 600g of ganja, and 1.48kg of brown sugar, seized from the possession of drug peddlers, was destroyed by the decision of the drug disposal committee and Bhubaneswar DSP.

The contrabands were destroyed at a designated incinerator at Sani Clean Pvt Ltd in Tangiapada, Khurda, following all due procedures.

The seized contrabands were first authenticated by a concerned court and handed over to the drug disposal committee.

Earlier, the Orissa High Court passed a landmark judgment directing the sub-ordinate courts to dispose the applications under section Sec 52A of NDPS Act, 1985, issuing a detailed SOP in this regard, as piling up of seized drugs has been a cause of concern for the STF.

Sources said till date the STF has disposed around 64kg of brown sugar in 51 cases and more than 137quintals of ganja in 31 cases including today's event.

Similarly, till date Odisha Police has disposed of more than 441MTs (4,41,000kg) of ganja and 79kg of brown sugar.



SPREADING AWARENESS: Security personnel of Acharya Harihar Post Graduate Institute of Cancer organise an awareness drive on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day in Cuttack, Friday

SSU to establish technology business incubator

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 31: Taking a step ahead towards institution's commitment to foster innovation, driving economic growth, and supporting the entrepreneurial spirit in the region, Sri Sri University to establish a cutting-edge Technology Business Incubator (TBI) at the university campus here. The initiative is supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, under the NIDHI Inclusive Technology Business Incubator (NIDHI iTBI) programme, with a substantial investment of Rs 4.91crore, including contributions from the university's management committee.

"The goal of the centre is to equip startups with the necessary tools and knowledge to thrive



in the competitive business landscape," said B R Sharma, vice chancellor of Sri Sri University. "By fostering innovation and supporting entrepreneurial ventures, we aim to drive economic growth and create a sustainable ecosystem that nurtures talent and promotes technological advancement," he added.

The TBI, spanning over 7,494sqft within the university premises, aims to revolutionise the startup ecosystem in the region and become a significant player in global technology. This initiative will particularly focus on sectors such as advanced

manufacturing, hardware, electronics, and some of the emerging technologies in information and communication technology. The facility will be equipped with state-of-the-art amenities, including a fabrication lab, design and development lab, co-working spaces and meeting rooms. Selected startups at the iTBI will benefit from extensive pre-incubation and incubation support here. This includes specialised training programmes that cover various aspects of business development and technical skills. Mentorship will be provided by experienced professionals who will guide through the complexities of transforming an idea into a viable business. The incubator will also offer advisory services to help startups navigate legal, financial, and operational challenges.



BIRTH ANNIV: Students of Kala Vikas Kendra perform on the occasion of 107th birth anniversary celebration of late film producer Babulal Doshi in Cuttack, Friday

BJD moves EC demanding action against BJP Basta Assly nominee

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 31: A delegation of Biju Janata dal (BJD) met the Chief Election Officer (CEO) here, Friday demanding action against BJP nominee from Basta Assembly constituency, Rabintra Nath Andia, for allegedly violating the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

The delegation, in a memorandum to the CEO, alleged that Andia distributed money and liquor in Rati panchayat under Baliapal block May 30 to influence voters. The constituency goes for polls today.

In the memorandum, BJD leader Sulata Deo said, "It has



come to our attention that Rabintra Nath Andia, the BJP MLA Candidate from Basta Assembly Constituency has been caught distributing money and foreign liquor by locals during the 'no campaign' period at Barakaurda village in Rati gram panchayat of Baliapal block at 10 pm May 30, 2024."

The BJD has also lodged an FIR at the Baliapal Police Station in this regard, the memoran-

dum stated. "This incident is not only a blatant disregard for the principles of fair and democratic elections but also a clear violation of the rules set forth in the model code of conduct. Such actions undermine the integrity of the electoral process and erode public trust in the democratic system," the memorandum added, demanding 'swift' and 'decisive' action against the violators. Moreover, the BJD delegation urged the Election Commission to intensify monitoring efforts in the Basta Assembly constituency and other areas to prevent similar violations from occurring in the future.

Hormone therapy may offer promise against breast cancer

Hormone therapy can be an effective treatment against some breast cancers that are affected by hormones, like oestrogen and progesterone, said health experts Friday.

Hormone therapy is different from hormone replacement therapy which can worsen breast cancer.

Though not all, some breast cancer tumours express hormone receptors, making them sensitive to hormones, and are termed hormone-sensitive breast cancers. When these receptors bind to oestrogen and progesterone, it promotes tumour growth.

Hormonal therapy, an easily available form of treatment and

consumed as a tablet, blocks these receptors or stops hormone production to curb cancer growth, reducing the risk of recurrence or metastasis.

"While it is called hormonal therapy it is actually 'anti-hormone', aimed at reducing the level of oestrogen levels in the body, thereby preventing its action on tumour cells within the body," Geeta Kadayaprath, Senior Consultant, Breast Surgery, Apollo Cancer Centres, New Delhi, told IANS.

"Hormonal treatment is a very effective form of treatment against hormone-sensitive tumours. In premenopausal women, the option is to use tamoxifen, which prevents the oestrogen hormone from binding



to the tumour cells whereas, in postmenopausal women, the preferred option is aromatase inhibitors which prevent the production of the hormone in the periphery, meaning fat, which is

also a source of hormones," the doctor explained.

The role of hormone therapy varies from preventive therapy in stage I-III to palliative therapy in stage IV.

"While it may not achieve a cure by itself, it plays an important and indispensable role in the treatment of hormone receptor-positive breast cancer," Tasneem Bharmal Associate Consultant, Medical Oncology Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Head and Neck Cancer Institute of India, Mumbai, told IANS.

Who can opt for it? Geeta said in older women, with early-stage hormone-sensitive disease, hormonal treatment alone may be used as an adjuvant form of treatment with results equivalent to those who receive chemotherapy.

"It is also minus the side effects of chemotherapy though. However, tamoxifen is known to increase the coagulability of

blood and increase uterine thickness, rarely leading to uterine cancer. In older women, aromatase inhibitors may be associated with bone pains, muscle pains, and sometimes, increased fracture risk," she said.

Tasneem noted that hormone therapies are widely available in India, "with costs ranging from Rs 200/month to Rs 10,000/month, depending on the prescribed hormone agent".

Potential side effects include hot flashes, osteoporosis, arthralgia, mood swings, and an increased risk of blood clots.

The health experts advocated for regular self-awareness, breast self-examination, and early presentation for treatment which are key for optimal outcomes. IANS

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Habaspuri weavers cry for attention

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, May 31: Weavers of Habaspuri Pata in Kalahandi district are struggling to save their traditional occupation as the saree renowned for intricate designs and unique weaving skills is on the verge of extinction.

This has happened due to lack of government sponsorship, shortage of raw materials and absence of marketing facilities.

The saree woven by the artisans in the district is a favourite among women and has created a niche for itself across India and abroad. However, the artisans engaged in weaving these sarees are doing their bit to keep their mills running despite a host of hurdles.

Handloom sarees are woven at various places in western Odisha. Barpali, Sonepuri, Bandha, Boudha and Sambalpuri sarees have made a name for themselves owing to their intricate designs and patterns but the Habaspuri saree in Kalahandi district is distinct.



The saree also attracted attention of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951 when it was put on display at an exhibition held at the Exhibition Ground in New Delhi. The then Kalahandi royal, Pratap Keshari Deo, explained the uniqueness of Habaspuri saree to Nehru and drew his appreciation for the fabric.

Habaspuri saree has also made its mark both in India and abroad showcasing traditional patterns such as 'kumbha' or pitcher, temple, fish, flowers and various other artworks and designs unique to the Kondh tribals.

The weaving of double flowers is an integral part of

Habaspuri saree. The wall paintings of tribals, patterns resembling tattoos on their body, and the designs of fish, deer and elephants increase the beauty of the saree manifold.

While bandha designs can be seen only on the borders of Sambalpuri sarees, they are woven in both the body and the borders of Habaspuri saree, which has also received the prestigious geographical indication (GI) tag. The famous 'Tata Tea' brand has printed a picture of Habaspuri saree on its packets.

However, the state government and the district administration have shown little interest in promoting the saree in national and international markets. This has pushed it to the verge of extinction with a dwindling production and its weavers losing their livelihood.

Sources said Kondh tribals first started weaving the Habaspuri saree in the 19th century, which drew appreciation from all for its beautiful patterns and alluring fabric.

Later, the members of Bhulia (weaver) community of Habaspur, Chicheiguda, Baldiamal, Chakuli villages in Kalahandi district accepted it as their traditional occupation by reviving the production of Habaspuri saree.

With the passage of time, the handloom saree witnessed a decline in demand after various fancy products made their way into the markets. Many of the weavers also let go of their traditional art and took up other occupations for a better income.

Recently, Sujit Kumar Meher, an international fashion designer of Chicheiguda, made an attempt to promote the saree in national and international levels through his business house 'Tilottama'. The Kalahandi-based Maa Manikeswari University's Vice Chancellor Sanjay Satpathy has also directed his students to wear Habaspuri uniforms. However, the cloth is reportedly being brought from outside and being sold to students for uniforms branding them as Habaspuri.

2 killed, 6 critical in Sundargarh mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hemagiri, May 31: Two women labourers died while six others sustained injuries as the pick-up van they were travelling in met with an accident near Usatali Ghati under this police limits in Sundargarh district, Friday. The deceased were identified as Matibai Gandhaba and Semabai Gandhaba.

According to sources, the pick-up van (23-L-3912) was carrying labourers from Hemagiri village to Balaji company at Duduka when the driver lost control and the vehicle fell into a 10-foot deep gorge near Usatali Ghati killing the two labourers on the spot.

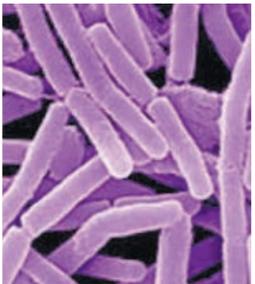
Locals rescued the injured and rushed them to Hemagiri Community Health Centre for treatment. Later two injured persons were shifted to Sundargarh District Headquarters Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

Tension erupted at the mishap site with locals resorting to agitation in demand of compensation for the families of the deceased women. They staged a road blockade which led to disruption vehicular traffic in the locality.



On being informed, Hemagiri police along with company officials reached the spot. The angry villagers relented after declaration of ₹1 lakh compensation and assurance to provide insurance money. Police seized the bodies and sent those for post-mortem.

3 anthrax cases detected in Koraput



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Koraput, May 31: Three persons have been found infected with anthrax in Koraput district, a Health department official said Friday.

The three cases have been reported in the Laxmipur block between Tuesday and Thursday, he said.

Anthrax is a disease caused by the spore-forming bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*.

Three persons tested positive for anthrax infection. They have been admitted to the Laxmipur Hospital for treatment. It is suspected that they came in contact with the carcass of an anthrax-infected cow, Koraput Additional District Medical Officer (Disease Control) Sathya Sai Swarup said.

According to the official, a team of health experts has been sent to the Kutinga village, where the anthrax cases were reported, to assess the situation.

The situation is now under control with no new cases reported, Swarup said, adding that efforts have been made to aware villagers of preventive measures against anthrax disease.

Information, education and communication (IEC) initiatives have been launched in the affected areas. The development is being closely monitored and adequate health officials have been deployed at the village and its surrounding areas to assess the situation for the next few days, he added.

Special summer measures for animals in RSP's zoo

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 31: With the scorching summer heat making life miserable here this year, not only human beings, but the animals also are tormented by the ongoing unprecedented heatwave. The Horticulture department has been taking all necessary steps and precautions to protect the animals, birds and reptiles of Indira Gandhi Park Zoo and Deer Park of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP).

Coolers have been installed in the enclosures of monkeys, macau and other avian species. Cool water is being sprayed over bear, deer and emus on a regular basis through water tankers. Water pools have been dug inside the paddock for bear, deer and emus to bathe in. The normal summer care provided includes succulent feed and anti-stress formulations in drinking water to

the primates, deer and birds. Round-the-clock water supply is ensured for all birds and animals. Flowing water has been arranged so as to avoid scum formation. Water is provided in ponds for wallowing animals. The dwellings are cleaned on a regular basis with medicinal disinfectants to prevent diseases. Water tankers are provided for sprinkling water on the sheds of the animals on every alternate day to prevent excessive heat.

All-out efforts are being made to avoid dehydration, sunstroke and other heat-related problems among the zoo dwellers. Special care is being taken for endangered and sensitive species so that they can get into the water anytime and keep cooling themselves off.

Indira Gandhi Park Zoo is the second largest integrated zoo of the state which houses 135 animals and birds belonging to 23 species. It gets a footfall of around one lakh visitors annually.



NOR'WESTER WOES: Fire personnel clearing trees that got uprooted during a thunderstorm and blocked the national highway near Chandragiri police outpost in Mohana block of Gajapati district, Friday

Project Wadi transforms Rayagada farmers' lives

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, May 31: Aditya Birla Group's Utkal Alumina International Ltd (UAIL), in collaboration with NABARD, has implemented Project Wadi in Rayagada district aiming at doubling the farmer's income.

The project under which agro-horticultural plantation and other income generating activities are in full swing, focuses on improving the quality of life of rural tribal households through enhancing their income in a sustainable manner in three to six years. Launched in 2019, Project Wadi is jointly funded by Utkal Alumina Jana Seva Trust



(UAJST), NABARD and UAIL.

Ugri Majhi's once barren land, which was yielding minimal returns from sporadic cultivation attempts, is now flourishing as a thriving fruit orchard. With Project Wadi's intervention, he received comprehensive support for every aspect of his orchard's

development including land demarcation, the installation of a solar-based irrigation system, crop cultivation, and financial literacy training.

The solar-based irrigation system has made a significant difference as it has enabled Majhi to cultivate high-value crops year-round. Transitioning from traditional farming methods, he began growing off-season produce such as bananas, papayas, and sunflowers. It has increased his monthly income manifold from ₹1,000-2,000 to over ₹10,000.

Reflecting on his journey, Majhi acknowledged the role played by Utkal Alumina towards better farm productivity.

One killed, 2 injured in lightning strike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Phulbani, May 31: A woman was killed and two of her family members were injured after lightning struck them in Kandhamal district Thursday afternoon, police said.

The incident occurred when the three, along with a goat, were in their house in Tikabali town, about 37 km from here, the sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) of Phulbani, Suprasanna Mallick, said. The deceased, identified as Rupali Bisoi (23), died on the spot, the police officer said, adding that the injured were admitted to a hospital at Tikabali and their health condition is stated to be stable.

"We have sent the body for autopsy to Tikabali primary health centre and further investigation into the incident is on," Mallick said.

Woman beaten to death by in-laws over dowry

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, May 31: In yet another alleged dowry death, a woman was beaten to death by her in-laws in Champampur village under Itamati police limits in Nayagarh district Thursday night.

The deceased has been identified as Padmini Pradhan, daughter of Rajib Pradhan of Sakeri village under Odagaon police limits.

According to reports, Padmini got married to Tapan Kumar Swain, 35, a resident of Champampur village 11 year ago. At the time of marriage dowry was given as per the demand of the groom's family. After a few months into their marriage, Padmini secured a job as a teacher. Even after this, her in-laws kept on press-

surising her demanding more dowries. When Padmini informed them that her family members declined to provide more dowries, she was tortured by her husband and in-laws. Padmini's family members alleged.

Tapan, who is a police officer, had a fierce argument with Padmini over money matters Thursday night. The feud took an ugly turn when Tapan and his mother mercilessly thrashed Padmini, Thursday Padmini reportedly succumbed to the severe beating. On being informed by villagers, police arrived at the spot, recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem.

Police detained Tapan for interrogation and launched a probe, along with a scientific team, into the circumstances that led to Padmini's death.

Decline in demand for local mango varieties hits tribals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 31: The drastic fall in sale of local mangoes and other seasonal fruits has affected the livelihood of tribals living in Keonjhar district. The tribals depend greatly on the sale of local variety of mangoes as it helps them earn handsomely and eke out a living during lean times. However, lack of proper storage and marketing facilities has forced them to sell the mangoes at throwaway prices. Also the entry of hybrid mango varieties, which are grown with rampant use of fertilizers, has affected the sale of local ones.

Locals said the state government should provide proper storage and marketing facilities for mangoes growing in this district. They added that the government can buy large quantities of the local mangoes and use those in various state-run food processing units. The fruits can be used in making jam, jelly, juice and other products like pickles.



These days tribals, mostly women with their kids, can be seen waiting for hours under the scorching sun on the streets of villages and in urban markets to sell the fruits. "If we don't sell the mangoes, they will

rot. Hence we sell the fruits at throwaway prices. We don't even earn enough to make for travel expenses from our village to the market," said Sukumari Juang of Banspal area in this district. Senior residents of this dis-

trict pointed out that due to falling income from sale of food products, the lives of the tribals have been severely affected. The district officials should step in to help the tribals, they said, pointing out that

With traditional mango orchards, called 'Amba Tota' in local parlance, being a thing of past, rampant felling of the trees has resulted in decreased production of the traditional varieties of mangoes

rampant felling of trees has resulted in decreased production of the traditional varieties of mangoes. Furthermore, the traditional mango orchards, called 'Amba Tota' in local parlance, are also fast vanishing from villages.

Retired professor Bimabhadhar Behera said, "Hybrid variety can never be a substitute for local mangoes. Hence, traditional mango trees should be protected. The government should initiate steps for protection of local varieties of mangoes through preservation efforts and proper marketing."

Boy gets new lease of life as iron rod removed from body

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, May 31: A nine-year-old boy got a new lease of life after the doctors at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) in Burla successfully removed an iron rod pierced into his body after he was stabbed by his friend following a quarrel at Rathpada under Bhatli police limits in Bargarh district, Friday.

According to reports, the boy identified as Jiban Patikar was stabbed with the iron rod by another minor boy and sustained critical injury as the rod was stuck inside his body near his lungs.

Family members immediately rushed him to the District Headquarters Hospital in Bargarh.

As his health condition deteriorated, he was shifted to VIMSAR in Burla. His condition is now stated to be stable.

EAST COAST RAILWAY	
e-Tender Notice No. ETCCONIBBS 2024021, Dated. 22.05.2024	
Name of Work: NEW LINE BETWEEN PURI AND KONARK (32.02 KM):- VERIFICATION, ALTERATION, MODIFICATION AS PER FIELD SURVEY AND PROVIDING ASSISTANCE FOR FINALIZATION OF AWARD OF SUBMITTED LAND ACQUISITION PROPOSAL FOR PRIVATE LAND/ GOVERNMENT LAND, DEMOLITION OF STRUCTURES & FELLING OF TREES PROVIDING LAND BOUNDARY POSTS WITH UNSERVICEABLE PSC SLEEPERS & OTHER ALLIED WORKS.	
Approx. Cost of the work:	₹179.99 lakhs, EMD: ₹2.40,000/-, Completion Period of the work: 12 (Twelve) Months.
Tender Closing Date & Time: 13.06.2024, 1200 hrs.	
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.	
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website http://www.reps.gov.in	
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website fifteen days before the date of closing of tender to note any Change/ Confinda issued for this tender. The changes/ Confinda issued for the tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered or IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.	
The tenderers should read all instructions to the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions including check lists, para 3.1 (additional check-list) of Tender form (Second sheet) Annexure-I of chapter 2 of Tender documents, submission of Annexure-B duly verified and signed by Chartered Accountant.	
Chief Engineer (Con)/II Bhubaneswar PR-22/CH/24-25	

FOCUS JUDICIARY

RIGHTS OF UNDERTRIALS



Experts have opined that the emphasis should be on reducing undertrial population by implementing the amended statutory provisions, judicial decisions regarding rights of undertrials, arrests and grant of bails, and the recommendations of various committees on prison reforms

sation, followed by indiscriminate arrests, weak bail entitlements and inadequate summary disposals through Lok Adalats. A large number of such prisoners are quite poor and cannot approach the judiciary for redressal. The need is for a holistic legislative reform that aims to expand of individual liberties. Moreover, automatic extension of remands has to stop which are also given merely for the sake of the convenience of the authorities.

It is worthwhile to recall here that the Supreme Court appointed a committee under retired Justice Amitava Roy, which gave some valuable recommendations pertaining to reforming prisons as well as treatment of undertrials. But these have not been taken seriously by the government. While speedy trials were emphasised, it suggested setting up of special fast-track courts to deal exclusively with petty offences which have been pending for more than five years.

An important recommendation was that adjournments should not be granted in cases where witnesses are present and the concept of plea bargaining, in which the accused admits guilt for a lesser sentence, should be promoted. Even in 2017, the Law Commission recommendation that undertrials who completed a third of their maximum sentence for offences up to seven years of imprisonment be released on bail, has not been fully implemented.

It goes without saying that prisoners should be provided with better facilities than convicts, including food, clothing, adequate medical facilities, sanitation, recreation and frequent communication with relatives and lawyers. A committee may again be appointed, jointly by the apex court in consultation with the government, to investigate the problems of undertrials and ensure they do not have to languish in jails unnecessarily. The new government must put this on its agenda.

INFA

There is a well-known saying that "justice delayed is justice denied". But due to the enormous pendency of cases in the country, there are a huge number of undertrial prisoners who are crowding the jails. As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), data from all states for the year 2022 around 75 per cent of those in India's 1330 prisons are undertrials. It has been found that the overall conviction rate for offences under the IPC is around 35 per cent while under UAPA, which has been increasingly used against professors, intellectuals and social activists, for their dissenting views, it is not even 10 to 12 per cent.

Even bail applications to UAPA victims are being denied on flimsy grounds. One may mention the case of G.N. Saibaba, who was acquitted by Bombay High Court after 10 years of what appears illegal imprisonment under UAPA. The price for this unjustified imprisonment, which includes his prestige and valuable years lost, is borne entirely by the so-called prisoner.

Very recently the online portal NewsClick Founder editor Prabir Purkayastha, was granted bail as the Supreme Court order observed: "There is no doubt in the mind of the court that any person arrested for allegation of commission of offences under provisions of UAPA or for that matter any other offence has a fundamental and statutory right to be informed about the grounds of arrest in writing and a copy of such written grounds of arrest has to be furnished to the arrested persons a matter of course and without exception at the earliest."

The government has gone to the extent of arresting persons whom it does not consider favourable to the ruling dispensation even without a detailed and written communication of the grounds of arrest. It's in this connection that the failure on the part of the police to inform Purkayastha and his advocate of the grounds of arrest

and the proposed remand application as well as the timing of the remand proceedings (as early as 6 am at the residence of the remand judge) suggest how investigative agencies may sidestep the process requirements to retain the custody of the accused. It is indeed distressing to note that with around 50 lakh arrests recorded every year and thousands of remand applications heard by judges every day, the criminal nature of this function cannot be overlooked, more so considering the extreme overcrowding in the prisons.

Delving into statistics, as per NCRB, over the last 10 years, the number of undertrials in jails has risen consistently and peaked in 2021. In 2020, about 76 per cent of all prison inmates in the country were undertrials, of which about 68 per cent were either illiterates or school dropouts. Delhi and Jammu & Kashmir were found to have the highest ratio of undertrials in jails at 91 per cent, followed by Bihar and Punjab at 85 per cent, and Odisha at 83 per cent.

It is also worth noting that in countries like the US, the UK and many other European countries, those in illegal imprisonment are eligible to file claims for compensation, which are then evaluated. However, in India no such system is preva-

lent. Various suggestions for a special law to compensate victims did feature in a report of the Law Commission in August 2018.

The former Supreme Court judge, B. S. Chauhan, recommended a law to compensate victims of miscarriage of justice, but nothing has been done till date. It was recommended that an interim compensation between ₹25,000 and ₹50,000 be paid in cases where a person spent more than six months in jail. The report also said the court should provide petitioners with non-pecuniary assistance for rehabilitation of victims, who have suffered imprisonment for no fault of theirs.

It is in this connection that the government as also the judiciary has a responsibility to the democratic process and to society for keeping such huge number undertrials in prisons. While the number of judges must be increased, specially in the High Courts, to start with retired judges may be engaged for say a year or so on contractual basis to clear at least some cases. It is, however, strange that no political party in their manifesto has talked of strengthening the judiciary and appointing more judges to clear cases.

The undertrials are victims of multiple failings that start with inappropriate criminali-



Dhurjati Mukherjee

DELHI AND JAMMU & KASHMIR WERE FOUND TO HAVE THE HIGHEST RATIO OF UNDERTRIALS IN JAILS AT 91 PER CENT, FOLLOWED BY BIHAR AND PUNJAB AT 85 PER CENT, AND ODISHA AT 83 PER CENT

To listen to some devout people, one would imagine that God never laughs

SRI AUROBINDO



Wait Continues

In a surprising twist, the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) postponed the much-awaited interview to select the next chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI). The last-minute decision came just hours before the interviews were set to begin, catching many by surprise.

The FSIB responsible for finding directors for state-owned banks and financial institutions, was set to interview candidates to replace Dinesh Khara, who is retiring on August 28 upon reaching the age of 63 for the chairman position.

The process typically involved choosing from the current managing directors of SBI. The FSIB recommends a candidate, with the final appointment made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Quite possible that the interviews were postponed due to the ongoing general elections and will take place once the new government is sworn in.

The FSIB is led by Bhanu Pratap Sharma, former secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) and the selection panel includes the Financial Services Secretary, the Department of Public Enterprises Secretary and an RBI Deputy Governor. Other members are Animesh Chauhan, former chairman and MD of Oriental Bank of Commerce, RBI's ex-executive director Deepak Singhal and Shailendra Bhandari, former MD of ING Vysya Bank.

The wait continues.

CISF takes charge, PSS future uncertain

Why have 3,300 CISF personnel abruptly replaced 1,400 CRPF personnel in guarding the two Parliament buildings during the general elections? This significant shift has sparked concerns, with many wondering about the future of the Parliament Security Service (PSS).

Observers and babus are puzzled by the decision to assign key security functions to the CISF, a force primarily experienced in managing public interactions at airports and metro stations. The CISF's limited familiarity with the unique security demands of Parliament has intensified these concerns. The PSS, on the other hand, has been a cornerstone of Parliament's security since India adopted its Constitution in 1950.

This move has naturally left many PSS officials anxious about their jobs. Contributing to their worries is the fact that no new hirings have been done in the past ten years. Additionally, PSS officers, originally hired by the Parliament secretariat, now fall under the jurisdiction of the Government of India, with rumours of forced retirement at age 55 further unsettling them.

The PSS has traditionally worked closely with other security agencies to ensure a seamless and user-friendly security environment. It specializes in identifying MPs, VIPs and staff, thereby preventing undue harassment and unauthorized entry. This expertise is now at risk as the CISF assumes control.

With no clear answers forthcoming, the apprehensions among PSS officials and the broader implications for parliamentary security remain unresolved.

Historic choice awaits

Rajiv Gauba, the current Cabinet Secretary of India, is set to make history as the longest-serving individual in this role if he steps down in August. Gauba, a 1982-batch officer from the Jharkhand cadre, will surpass P.K. Sinha, who served just over four years.

While one shouldn't get ahead of oneself in figuring out his likely successor, three standout 1987 batch IAS officers are in the running to step up to his role. Gauba's replacement will likely be one of these three - Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan, Gujarat Chief Secretary Raj Kumar, and Jal Shakti Secretary Vini Mahajan - each with an impressive background and excellent credentials.

Somanathan, from the Tamil Nadu cadre, is known for his financial expertise and integrity and has held significant roles, including a notable stint at the World Bank. His reputation is such that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh extended his tenure at the World Bank upon a request from the bank leadership. By all accounts, Somanathan is well-aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic agenda, which is seen as a big plus for his claim.

Raj Kumar is another candidate and has held crucial positions such as Secretary of Defence Production and Chief Secretary of Gujarat, Modi's home turf. He has effectively managed sensitive departments, demonstrating his capability in high-pressure roles. More notably, he is known to be straightforward and enjoys Modi's trust.

Vini Mahajan, the third contender, is poised to make history as India's first woman Cabinet Secretary! A former chief secretary of Punjab, she has had extensive experience in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) under Manmohan Singh and is known for rational and methodical planning. Interestingly, all three are first-attempt IAS officers, the youngest of their batch, and known for their integrity.

Barring the appearance of the proverbial dark horse at the last minute, one of these three babus may become the next Cabinet Secretary.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian). Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well spent brings happy death
LEONARDO DA VINCI

My success will not depend on what A or B thinks of me
HOMI JEHANGIR BHABHA

Give me a place to stand, and a lever long enough, and I will move the world
ARCHIMEDES

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1794: The first great naval engagement of the French Revolutionary wars, the Battle of the First of June, was fought between England and France in the Atlantic Ocean.

1926: American motion-picture star Marilyn Monroe, who became a major sex symbol and cultural icon, was born in Los Angeles.

1968: Blind and deaf American author Helen Keller died in Westport, Connecticut.

LOL

Celebrating an event

An aged farmer and his wife were leaning against the edge of their pigpen when the old woman wistfully recalled that the next week would mark their golden wedding anniversary. "Let's have a party, Homer," she suggested. "Let's kill a



grizzled head. "Gee, Ethel," he finally answered, "I don't see why the pig should take the blame for something that happened fifty years ago."

BEYOND THE HEADLINE

The demon within

The countdown has begun; the two month long electoral exercise nearing an end; the vitiated atmosphere dissipating and the M word, the key in this election, will die a natural death.

The M word: minorities, a particular section, mangalsutra and mujra.

For record, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that the INDIA bloc was performing mujra for votes, a dance by nautch girls; the Congress, if it comes to power, would snatch away the mangalsutra, the thread worn by Hindu women sanctifying marriage; and infiltrators, read minorities, would have the first right over the country's resources.

Leaving nothing to chance, Modi made it a point to mention "those who have more children". Islam, as is well known, permits polygamy and discourages family planning.

Come June 4, focus would shift to the seat of power: who will be in and who out; who will make it and who won't, being the key.

Equally, this election is not so much about the win, as it is about numbers.

That the BJP will form the government is kind of a given. The debate is about the number of seats it would bag, the 400 paar or 400 plus, being a pipedream: quite like Modi baiters saying that this election would go the India Shining way.

For the uninitiated, NDA's India Shining campaign was the key slogan of Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 2004 but it was an election that Vajpayee, a popular Prime Minister, lost.

As for rhetoric, the BJP claims to have bagged the dream number. Reality check: this is easier said than done.

As of now, the BJP is in a piquant situation vacillating between over-confidence and nervousness: over-confidence of winning and clearly nervous about the numbers.

Similarly, the government is faced with a dilemma: external threat versus internal dynamics.

On external security, there is a consensus that India needs a strong leader like Modi to stand up to the world.

Yet, internally there is insecurity of the same iron hand

crushing the will of the people and unleashing the politics of vendetta. The common man may not shed tears for corrupt politicians but he does fear a government that could clamp down at will.

Till the elections actually got off the ground, the BJP was riding high. The gains included the Ram temple construction, the success of G 20 summit and of course Brand Modi.

Visibly confident of sweeping the polls, BJP leaders discussed 2023 elections instead of 2024. Their logic: "2024 is a done deal".

So, what went wrong? Where did it slip up? Did the Party fail to fathom the undercurrent? Was there a silent anger against a government that spoke of democracy but actually practiced a dictatorial form? Finally, is this election one which is between the Government versus the people rather than the Government pitched against the Opposition?

For starters, the Modi Brand has somewhat lost its sheen. While his welfare schemes are likely to pay off, what may not be the divisive politics and the fear of the Constitution being in danger.

On the last, the INDIA bloc has hit the bull's eye. Else would Modi hammer the point that changing the Constitution is "impossible" as long as "Modi is alive": his theme song in election rallies?

At another level, there is an enemy lurking within. Neither the BJP nor the RSS want a genie out of the bottle. A Modi win with impressive numbers would be one such.

The back story is that the RSS cadres were asked to work for a win but not numbers. This perhaps explains the low turnout in the elections because the cadres were not enthused to mobilize voters.

Within the BJP too, there was an absence of a spirited campaign because leaders who were denied tickets took a backseat. A case in point: Jayant Sinha who was rapped for "not voting". Sinha, a former Minister, was denied a ticket to contest this election.

The sum total: there are enough demons that the Modi-Shah duo has to combat both within and outside. Therefore, when it comes to a headcount, June 4 could be the BJP's Ides of March.

The views are personal



Kumkum Chadha

THE COMMON MAN MAY NOT SHED TEARS FOR CORRUPT POLITICIANS BUT HE DOES FEAR A GOVERNMENT THAT COULD CLAMP DOWN AT WILL

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Testing time

Sir, The equation looks very difficult still at the national level, so far as the formation of government by the INDIA bloc at the centre is concerned. You cannot win the Lok Sabha until you win the Hindi heartlands. We don't see that happening, and the Congress party, which claimed to be the leader of the bloc, is trying to have alliances there instead of growing its presence at the grass roots. What we think is that the grand old party needs refactoring after these many defeats. They have to acknowledge their failures and try to work on them. Especially, they have to try new leadership and provide constructive opposition. If they do all this, they can definitely come back to power.

Jayanthi Subramaniam, EAST MUMBAI

Right to privacy

Sir, Apropos, "People will decide successor: Naveen," Orissa POST, May 31. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern about Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's health and suggested a possible conspiracy by the 'lobby that has been enjoying power from behind the scenes'. The PM's pitch lends his weight to a controversy that has till now remained mostly below the surface. The question is: is there a conspiracy behind the deteriorating health condition of Naveen Babu? In our country, the personal lives of political leaders, including their health issues, have been kept out of the political and electoral conversation and gaze. Of course, in times when the citizen's right to know has acquired greater salience, a case can be made for greater openness and transparency on the health of those who hold public office, or aspire to it. India's public discourse has, by and large, been more reticent and circumspect. But the lines and boundaries that have been drawn and observed can be revisited and revised in keeping with the changing temper of the times and the reworked balance between the politicians' right to privacy and the public's right to know. This, however, is a discussion for calmer times. It cannot be had amid the electoral battle's heated to-and-fro, the floating of conspiracy theories, and spectre-mongering. A careful balance needs to be struck, and care must be taken to ensure that rumour, gossip, and innuendo are not given a free pass in the name of informing the public.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Residents battle for water in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: The residents of Delhi continue to face an acute water crisis this summer, with scenes of long queues and people struggling to secure even a basic supply in several areas.

As temperatures soar to nearly 50 degrees Celsius, the demand for water has risen significantly, leaving many desperate and frustrated.

The residents in several areas of Delhi are lining up with their plastic containers, anxiously waiting for the water tankers.

Vibha Devi, a resident of Geeta Colony, shared her plight: "I stand in line from 4 am, but due to the crowd, I can't reach the water tanker...It's hard to get water."

Asked whether she manages to get water, she said, "Sometimes we get water, sometimes we don't. When we don't, we have to buy it from outside and use it sparingly."

Speaking about the insufficient supply of water tankers, another local Gajendra Pratap Singh said, "Tanker comes in our area, but it's only half full since they need to deliver the other half somewhere else, and for this half, we stand in line from early morning."

The frustration is evident among the residents, who jos-



LG blames AAP govt for 'mismanagement'

New Delhi: Lt Governor V K Saxena accused the AAP government of "mismanagement" and alleged that it has become their habit to blame others for their "inefficiency", "inability" and "inaction". Saxena recited a 200-year-old couplet by Mirza Ghalib, 'Umra bhar Ghalib yehi bhool karta raha, dhool chehre par thi aur aaina saaf karta raha', and slammed the AAP dispensation for blaming other states for the current situation. Scenes of desperation were visible in several parts of Delhi where people even resorted to fighting and using abusive language as they waited for their turns in queues to get water from the tankers. The Delhi government moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to Haryana to release surplus water provided by Himachal Pradesh to the parched national capital for urgent mitigation of its water woes compounded by scorching heat.

tle for their share as soon as the tanker arrives.

Expressing concern about the problems faced by them, another local Neelam said, "We don't even have water to drink. Every day, people are fighting for water as there are thousands waiting in line for three to four hours, but the demand is not being met." Many people are also taking

to social media to complain about the water problem in their areas.

Delhi BJP leader Virendra Sachdeva accused the AAP government of corruption, alleging mismanagement and wastage of water.

Sachdeva claimed, "Haryana is providing water; but by the time it reaches Delhi, 53 per cent gets wasted due to mismanagement."

AS TEMPERATURES SOAR TO NEARLY 50 DEGREES CELSIUS, THE DEMAND FOR WATER HAS RISEN SIGNIFICANTLY, LEAVING MANY DESPERATE AND FRUSTRATED

THE RESIDENTS IN SEVERAL AREAS OF DELHI ARE LINING UP WITH THEIR PLASTIC CONTAINERS, ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR THE WATER TANKERS

The BJP leader said the government knows Delhi faces such issues during the summer season and asked why it did not come up with a summer action plan to address the issue.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made an appeal to the Centre and the BJP to urge the governments of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to help Delhi meet its water demand.

"The entire country is experiencing unprecedented heat, leading to a water and electricity crisis. However, water demand has surged while supply from neighbouring states has decreased. We must solve this together. BJP protests won't help. I urge everyone to set aside politics and work together to provide relief. If BJP can secure some water from Haryana and UP for Delhi, it would be greatly appreciated. Let's unite to provide relief during this heatwave," he wrote on X.

Commuters hit as CR starts 63-hr mega block

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 31: Users of the Central Railway (CR)'s suburban services faced delays and overcrowding Friday morning after a 63-hour-long block commenced to widen platforms at Thane.

The mega block, which started at Thursday midnight, has affected the suburban services on CR's main corridor, causing inconvenience to lakhs of office-goers.

The Maharashtra government Friday permitted all public service vehicles in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) to carry out stage carriage operations during the mega block, an official said.

The government issued a notification in the afternoon, more than 12 hours after the 63-hour block commenced, permitting public service vehicles, including buses, taxis and autorickshaws, to ferry passengers from any point, he said.

The government has granted permission under section 66 of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988, the official said.

Another transport department official said taxi, auto rickshaws and contract carriage buses can pick up and drop passengers at multiple locations as per the notification.



Commuters complained of delays of up to 30 minutes, packed local trains and overcrowding at major stations due to the block scheduled for widening platforms 5 and 6 at Thane station.

CR has already announced that at least six long-distance trains and 161 local services will remain cancelled Friday due to the block.

Anticipating delays and overcrowding, railway authorities have urged commuters to avoid suburban train journeys if not absolutely necessary.

They have also appealed to public and private establishments to allow their employees to work from home or provide them alternate means of transport during the block period, besides asking state and municipal transport bodies to run extra buses.

During the block between Friday and Sunday, 72 long-distance and 930 suburban services will remain cancelled, a senior official had said Thursday.

A CR spokesperson said they have completed some work well before schedule, and things will improve soon.

The official added that local trains, considered Mumbai's lifeline, are currently running 15 to 20 minutes behind schedule, but the situation was expected to improve by 10.30 am.

ILLEGAL ENCROACHMENT

HC directs MCD, DDA to frame rules for imposition of fine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: Delhi High Court has directed land-owning agencies the DDA and the MCD to frame rules to levy charges on squatters for illegal encroachment on public land and space.

Justice Rajnish Bhatnagar said in case of encroachment, the encroacher shall be made liable by the land owning authorities concerned to the extent of the illegal encroachment done by him.

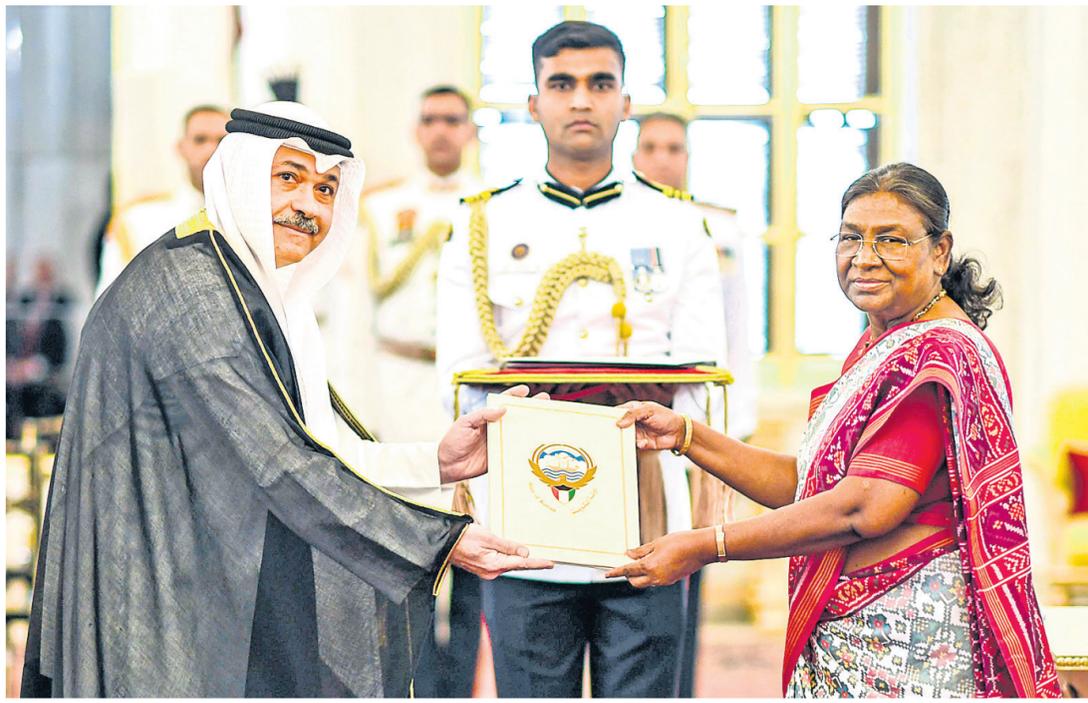
The high court said encroachment on public places, especially footpaths and roads by putting hoardings, stalls, furniture pieces such as tables and chairs, has become so rampant that it forces the public to walk on roads.

It said encroachments leave road and footpath users in a life-threatening situation by exposing them to vehicles plying on the roads and endangering their lives.

"The land-owning authorities, that is, the DDA (Delhi Development Authority) and the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) are directed to devise a mechanism or frame rules so as to levy charges on the encroacher for illegal encroachment on public land..." the court said in an order passed May 27.

"There should be a clear perception through careful quantification of the charges to be recovered from the encroacher that shall be for the benefit of the public at large," it added.

It said that for ascertaining the charges to be recovered from the encroacher, the land-owning authorities shall take into consideration factors such as the area of encroached land, period for which the encroached land was illegally used by the encroacher for their own personal gains, the market price or circle rate of the encroached area or as the case may be.



President Droupadi Murmu accepts credentials from the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait, Meshal Mustafa J Alshemali, during a ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi

Delhi hospital fire death toll rises to 7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: The death toll in a fire in an east Delhi neonatal hospital rose to seven Friday after a 50-day-old infant who was rescued from the incident site succumbed during treatment, police said.

"A 50-day-old girl child was under treatment. She succumbed Friday morning. Further investigation has been initiated," a senior police officer said.

A family member of the victim also confirmed that the child has died.

"Doctors told us about her death Friday morning," said a family member. A senior police officer said



the child did not have any burn injury when she was rescued from the hospital.

The fire tragedy at the Baby Care New Born Hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar May 26

claimed the lives of six newborns and left five babies injured.

The blaze broke out at the hospital at around 11:30 pm and soon spread to two adjacent buildings.

Sixteen fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the flames and a massive rescue operation was carried out to bring out seven children alive from the hospital. Six newborns had already died.

Police had said one child had died before the fire broke out.

According to the fire department, the neonatal hospital had no fire NOC (no-objection certificate) and not even proper fire-combat arrangements. Besides, the oxygen cylinders kept at the hospital had exploded due to the fire.

The fire started from a short circuit in a generator, police had said.

Pench Tiger Reserve gets AI-based fire detection system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, May 31: The Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Maharashtra has launched an advanced artificial intelligence-based system for early detection of forest fires, an official said Friday.

The state-of-the-art system will enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of fire detection efforts in the reserve, deputy director of PTR (Maharashtra), Prabhu Nath Shukla, said.

As per an official release, the new system features a high-resolution camera with a visual range of 15 km, effectively covering more than 350 sq km of the reserve.

The AI-powered platform, known as Pantera, leverages both the camera feed and satellite-based data to provide real-time alerts of forest fires within three minutes, the release said.

The system consists of a tower with a camera and a control room.

The camera is installed at a tower on one of the highest hills of the reserve near Kirringisarra village, and it is connected to the control room in the West Pench range office at Koltimara, the release said.

"Traditionally, the forest department has relied solely on satellite-based alerts for fire detection. However, the AI system marks a transformative upgrade



by incorporating visual data from the camera, enabling quicker and more precise detection of potential fires," Shukla said. One of the standout fea-

tures of the AI system is its capability to differentiate between smoke and clouds and nighttime detection.

The system also receives

weather data related to temperature, precipitation, wind, etc, and analysing data with past fires, the system forecasts the probable future fires in the short term, which helps in planning fire control.

The system can also be integrated with water tanks, forest vehicles, etc, that have GPS.

The project has been successfully implemented through a collaboration between PTR, Maharashtra, Satpuda Foundation, Umgramojo (Brazil) and Forest Fire Tech, a division of Scalee Inc., USA.

Part of the project was funded by Solar Industries India Limited, Nagpur and the rest by the state government.

Water stock at 22.06% in Maharashtra dams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 31: The average water stock in nearly 3,000 dams in Maharashtra is down to 22.06 per cent, with the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar division recording the lowest at 8.78 per cent, an official said Friday.

As per an official report, the stock has depleted by 0.58 per cent in the last two days.

The state has 2,997 large, medium and small dams, and the highest number of 920 reservoirs were in the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar division.

The current stock of 22.06 per cent is 8.8 per cent less than the



stock recorded May 31 last year, the report stated.

The Pune division has the second lowest stock of 15.67 per cent, followed by Nashik (24.06 per cent), Konkan (34.22 per cent), Nagpur (38.17 per cent) and 38.56 per cent in Amravati, it said.

As of May 29, as many as 3,072 villages and 7,931 hamlets in 25 districts were being supplied water through tankers, it was stated.

They have also appealed to

NCPCR: Shelters for street children

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane, May 31: NCPCR chairperson Priyank Kanoongo has proposed setting up cooperative shelters to rehabilitate street children and their families in Maharashtra's Thane district.

As per a release issued by the district administration Friday, Kanoongo emphasised the urgent need for concerted efforts to ensure permanent rehabilitation of street children and their families.

The chief of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) presided over a meeting held at the Collector's office Wednesday.

Highlighting the collaborative efforts initiated since 2016, Kanoongo stressed the necessity of sustainable rehabilitation for children and their families.



Municipal corporations and municipalities need to take proactive steps, including enhancing financial capacity and facilitating school enrollment for street children, he said.

Kanoongo proposed the establishment of "cooperative shelters" as an effective solution, citing a successful project in Bhopal.

He urged officials from the Women and Child Development Department to visit such projects, study their methodologies, and replicate them in Thane district, the release stated.



BARCHANA ASSEMBLY SEAT

Silent voters may play decisive role



AMAR NAYAK | VARSHA PRIYADARSHINI | AJAY KUMAR SAMAL

Chandikhole, May 31: The silent voters of Barchana Assembly constituency under Jajpur Lok Sabha segment might play a decisive role in determining the fate of the candidates in fray for the Phase IV polls to be held Saturday.

Reports say there is lack of enthusiasm among the voters in this constituency this time. Although the constituency witnessed campaigning before the electioneering came to an end 48 hours of the polling, Thursday, the competition among the party workers to put up posters and banners is also missing this time.

Similarly, campaigning through public address system is also lacklustre this time. A mysterious silence is gripping the workers of various parties and voters this time which political analysts believe will play a decisive role in deciding the outcome of the polls.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has

ALTHOUGH THE CONSTITUENCY WITNESSED CAMPAIGNING BEFORE THE ELECTIONEERING CAME TO AN END 48 HOURS OF THE POLLING, THE COMPETITION AMONG THE PARTY WORKERS TO PUT UP POSTERS AND BANNERS IS MISSING THIS TIME

CAMPAIGNING THROUGH PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM IS ALSO LACKLUSTRE THIS TIME

A MYSTERIOUS SILENCE IS GRIPPING THE WORKERS OF VARIOUS PARTIES AND VOTERS THIS TIME WHICH POLITICAL ANALYSTS BELIEVE WILL PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN DECIDING THE OUTCOME OF THE POLLS

fielded actor Varsha Priyadarshini as its candidate for this constituency by replacing six-time winner Amar Prasad Satpathy. The saffron party has reposed faith on Amar Nayak who contested the seat in 2019. Similarly, Congress has repeated Ajay Kumar Samal as the party candidate. Satpathy is reported to have

been losing enthusiasm after the ruling party denied him a ticket and picked Varsha instead. The ruling BJD denying him ticket has disappointed his supporters and many party workers which is stated to be one of the reasons for the dismal campaigning.

Barchana Assembly segment has 1,93,235 voters of whom 94,438 are female, 98,792 male and five are transgender. As many as 4,206 new voters have been enrolled in the voter list this time.

Reports said Satpathy won 2019 election by defeating his nearest rival of BJP Amar Nayak by a margin of 1,485 votes. While Satpathy received 64,084 votes, Nayak received 62,599 votes. Congress' Ajay Kumar Samal received 9,322 votes and lost his deposits. Similarly, four independent candidates contesting in this election had failed to get more than 500 votes.

It appears that there would be a tough fight between BJD and BJP this time.

BJD's poll strategist Kartik Pandian and party's organisational secretary Pranab Prakash (Bobby) Das have campaigned for party nominee Varsha twice by attending two meetings.

Similarly, BJP's national president Jagat Prakash Nadda and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan have joined two meetings and campaigned for the party nominee Amar Nayak. BJP also tried to get closer to voters by conducting a roadshow on the last day of polling, Thursday.



ON GUARD: Contingents of Central forces and Odisha Police conduct flag march at Panikoli Bazaar in Jajpur district on the eve of final phase polls, Friday



A 'Youth Booth' set up on Subhadrapur Primary School premises in Derabish block of Kendrapara district awaits young voters



Polling officials leave for their respective booths with EVMs and election materials at Baripada in Mayurbhanj district, Friday

Silk City liquor shops to remain shut at 9pm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, May 31: Odisha Police have directed all liquor outlets in the Silk City here to down the shutters by 9pm until June 6.

The step has been taken to preempt any potential post-election unrest before and after the announcement of the Lok Sabha and Assembly election results, Berhampur SP Sarthak Sarangi said Friday.

The directive comes in the wake of a recent incident where a 40-year-old person with a criminal record was fatally attacked at a tattoo parlour in the Housing Board area under

Gosainuagaon police station limits.

Lok Sabha and Assembly elections were held in Berhampur parliamentary constituency May 13, with results scheduled for June 4.

Though there were no major election-related disturbances in Berhampur, this preventive measure is aimed at ensuring tranquility during the aftermath of the polls, Sarangi added.

While bars are not mandated to close by 9pm, police will intensify patrolling in the city to uphold law and order. The Election Commission has declared June 4 as a dry day.

INDIA bloc will get clear mandate: Jairam Ramesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: The Congress Friday exuded confidence that the opposition alliance will get a "clear and decisive" mandate June 4 when the results of the Lok Sabha polls are announced and claimed that many NDA constituents will be queuing up to join the INDIA bloc.

AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh also claimed that his party would have a strong performance in several states in which it had been wiped out in the 2019 polls.

Asked to comment on RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav's remarks that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar could do another 'palti',

Ramesh said, "He has an old habit of 'palti' (volte-face). I do not have any information on what he will do on June 4 but we are going to get a mandate without him. INDIA 'janbandhan' is going to get the mandate, there will be no need of the JD(U)."

"You will see that the results from Bihar will be surprising and there would be no need of 'palti' but those who want to do 'palti' we cannot stop them," the Congress general secretary said at a press conference at the AICC headquarters here.

Asked about the reasons for the Congress confidence that it will secure people's mandate June 4, Ramesh said he had said after two phases that the INDIA 'janbandhan' is going to get a clear



and decisive mandate.

"Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, and in states where in 2019 we had been wiped out, this time you will see we will have a strong performance. In Rajasthan our performance will be strong and in UP, Maharashtra and Bihar, we will have a strong performance as an alliance," he said.

"I am not saying this sitting here in Delhi, I have gone to these states, our leaders

Mallikarjun Kharge ji, Rahul Gandhi ji and Priyanka Gandhi ji have gone to these states. The environment that was there in 2019 especially in these states," Ramesh said, adding that he would also add Haryana and Punjab to the list of states where the Congress would do well.

Ramesh said the biggest reason for the Congress' self-confidence is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign, claiming that he was rattled.

"The Congress used to be criticised that you don't have a narrative, you keep changing (stance), this time this can be said of the PM. He used to raise a new issue to divert people's attention (during the people's campaign)," Ramesh said.

"The epidemic of lies that he spread on our manifesto, on Rahul Gandhi's speeches and Kharge ji's speeches, it was clear that he was rattled," he added. Ramesh further said the self-confidence with which Prime Minister Modi used to speak is lacking this time.

"In 2019, there was Balakot which was an emotional issue. This time there was no wave. I think quietly farmers, youth (voted). The issue of the Constitution and reservation that arose was also beneficial for us. That is why I say with confidence that we will get a clear and decisive mandate. Many NDA constituents will be queuing up to join the INDIA bloc," he said.

Campaign 2024 mired with barbs, name calling & more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: 'Vish guru', 'anubhavi chor', 'do shehzade'... As Election 2024 hurdles towards result day in a medley of 'mangalsutra, mujra, mutton, machhli' and other barbs, these may sound like character names from Hindi comics of yore. Instead, these are the mocking, sometimes vicious monikers, given by political rivals to each other.

Here is a sampler from the just concluded Lok Sabha campaign that got progressively more heated, quite like the summer sun scorching large swathes of India, with leaders from across the spectrum using political speak to sharpen their verbal knives with epithets, sarcasm and more: 'Puppet king' of 'tempo billionaires': Rahul to Modi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a 'puppet king' of 'tempo billionaires' over his remarks on the Congress receiving 'cash loaded in tempos' from 'Adani and Ambani'.

'Do shehzade': Modi's jibe at Rahul, Akhilesh
'Do shehzade' (two princes) have come together for the politics of appeasement, Modi said at a poll rally in Uttar Pradesh. He didn't take any names but it was an apparent attack on Congress' Rahul Gandhi and SP president Akhilesh Yadav.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh lashed out at Modi over his speeches at election rallies, saying the lan-



guage he used suggests he is not a 'vishwa guru' but a 'vish guru'. 'Vishwa guru' refers to a world leader. 'Vish' means poison.

'Mandi me bhav': Supriya Shrinete targets Kangana Ranaut

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete posted a picture of actor Kangana Ranaut, the BJP's candidate from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh and captioned it "Mandi me bhav kya chal raha hai". The post faced massive backlash for being derogatory, prompting Shrinete to remove it from all her social media accounts.

Modi 'sva-ghoshit bhagwan'

Rahul Gandhi mocked Modi over his not "born biologically" remark by saying an ordinary person would have been taken to a psychiatrist had he/she uttered the statement. His colleague Jairam Ramesh went on to dub the PM 'sva-ghoshit bhagwan' (self-de-

clared god) while attacking the BJP over the Agnipath scheme.

Modi's 'anubhavi chor' barb at Arvind Kejriwal

In a veiled dig at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during a TV interview, Modi said an 'anubhavi chor' knows how to clear his tracks. This was in response to a question on the absence of a cash trail in the alleged liquor policy scam in Delhi.

INDIA bloc performing 'mujra' for its vote bank

Modi accused the INDIA bloc of "enslavement" and performing "mujra" for the Muslim vote bank and vowed to thwart alleged attempts to rob Dalits and backward classes of reservations by the opposition grouping.

The four Ms, 'mujra, mangalsutra, machhli, mutton'

and Lalu Prasad consuming mutton allegedly during the month of Sawan was splashed in a big way by the BJP. Modi said opposition parties were displaying their Mughal mindset and teasing the majority community by sharing the videos to consolidate their vote banks.

He also accused the INDIA bloc of performing 'mujra' for the Muslim vote bank.

At a rally in Rajasthan, the PM claimed the Congress' election manifesto promises to snatch away Hindu women's 'mangalsutra' and redistribute it to 'infiltrators' and 'those who have more children' - alluding to Muslims. The issue was seized by opposition leaders, including Congress chief Kharge and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, slamming Modi for the remarks. Modi's 'buffalo' jibe against Congress

At an election rally in Gujarat, Modi attacked the Congress over the issue

of inheritance tax, saying if someone has two buffaloes, the opposition party will take away one if it wins the Lok Sabha polls. Hitting back at the PM, Lalu Prasad of the RJD - a constituent of the INDIA bloc - said Modi will be given a camel.

'Jhoothon ka sardar' Modi

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, speaking in Haryana, sought the BJP's response on its promise of two crore jobs each year, Rs 15 lakh in everyone's bank account, and doubling of farmers' income. He then called the PM 'jhoothon ka sardar' or the king of liars.

'Amul babies' Rahul and Priyanka

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma labelled Rahul and Priyanka 'Amul babies', saying people in the state would rather see "tigers and rhinos in Kaziranga" than watch the siblings at their election campaign

events.

Bhagwant Mann 'kazagi CM'
Addressing a rally in Punjab, Modi called AAP leader and Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann a 'kazagi CM' - chief minister only on paper.

'Bada pappu', 'chhotu pappu': Kangana mocks Rahul, Vikramaditya

The actor-turned-politician referred to Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Vikramaditya Singh, who is also her rival in Mandi, as 'bada pappu' and 'chhotu pappu'. She also called the Congress "a disease" and "termites" left by Britishers.

INDIA bloc 'congregation of scammers'

Modi said at Bihar rally that the INDIA bloc is a "congregation of scammers" and its leaders stood for corruption, appeasement politics and a "perverted anti-Sanatan mindset".

'Job-eater' BJP

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee dubbed the BJP "job-eater" after the Calcutta High Court scrapped the recruitment of nearly 26,000 teachers in the state. Banerjee accused the BJP of "conspiring" to stall the TMC government's decision.

Congress: 'mureed' of Pakistan

Modi called the Congress a 'mureed' (disciple) of Pakistan and said Islamabad was rooting for Rahul Gandhi as India's next PM.

'Samapt party' and 'kaun Congress' - Rajnath's dig at SP-Congress

Addressing a rally in Uttar Pradesh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the SP and the Congress will be known as 'Samapt Party' and 'Kaun Congress' after the results are announced.

national

of the day quote

The growing technology of artificial intelligence cannot hijack real intelligence



MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | BJP LEADER

Last year, the peak demand for electricity in Delhi was 7438 MW. In comparison, this year the peak demand has reached 8302 MW. But despite this, the electricity situation in Delhi is under control, there are no power cuts like other states



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

The BJP government is going to be formed in the country for the third (consecutive) time under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi



BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

X POST OF THE DAY

In 1st Assembly session CM KCR garu was a statesman who thanked Congress and BJP for supporting his cause of Telangana Statehood...

In 1st Assembly session CM Revanth challenged to erase KCR garu's every creation from history Telangana State... There is no comparison between a Fighter & a Felon...

@KRISHANK_BRS

SHORT TAKES

PIO girl 'fighting for life' in London

London: A nine-year-old Indian-origin girl, yet to be formally identified but believed to be from Kerala, is in critical condition in hospital 'fighting for her life' after suffering a gunshot wound in a drive-by shooting from a motorbike in east London.

Four jailed Indians repatriated from Pak

New Delhi: Four Indian prisoners in Pakistan were repatriated to India this week, officials said Friday. The prisoners are Suraj Pal (Uttar Pradesh), Wahida Begum (Assam) and her son Faiz Khan and Shabir Ahmad Dars (Rajasthan), they said.

Monsoon reaches northern Bengal

Kolkata: The southwest monsoon reached sub-Himalayan West Bengal Friday, covering most parts of the region, nearly a week ahead of schedule, the Met Department said.



Actually I am making this appeal because the BJP people have made a plan that as soon as the elections are over tomorrow evening, they will start getting their 'media group (media mandali)' to say on various channels that the BJP has got a lead of around 300 seats, which is completely false

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT

AVIAN INFLUENZA: CENTRE ASKS STATES TO BE VIGILANT

The Centre has asked all states to be vigilant for any unusual deaths amongst the domestic birds and poultry, and share the information with the Animal Husbandry Department immediately so that public health action can be initiated as per the national action plan for Avian influenza



Water level at India's main reservoirs drops

New Delhi, May 31: Water level at 150 major reservoirs of the country has dropped to 23 per cent, which is 77 per cent less than last year's at the same time, according to Central Water Commission (CWC) data.

Last week, the storage at these reservoirs was at 24 per cent. At present, the storage is merely 77 per cent of last year's levels and 94 per cent of the normal storage, CWC data stated.

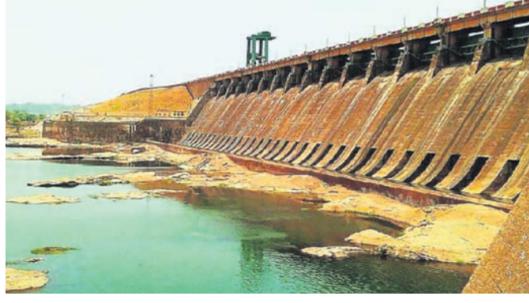
In its latest weekly bulletin, released Friday, the commission said that "the total live storage available is 41.705 billion cubic metres (BCM), equating to 23 per cent of the total capacity."

"This is a significant decrease from the 53.832 BCM recorded during the same period last year and the normal storage level of 44.511 BCM. Consequently, the current storage is only 77 per cent of last year's levels and 94 per cent of the normal storage," the commission said.

The 150 main reservoirs monitored by the CWC have a combined live storage capacity of 178.784 BCM, which is around 69.35 per cent of the total storage capacity created in the country.

Ten of the 150 reservoirs are located in the northern region - Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan - and have a live storage capacity of 19.663 BCM. This has dropped to 5.864 BCM (30 per cent of total capacity), according to the CWC bulletin for the week May 16 to May 31.

Last year, during the corresponding period, storage was at 38 per cent. The normal storage at this time of the year is 31 per cent. In the eastern region - Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Tripura, Nagaland and Bihar - there are 23 reservoirs with a total live storage capacity of 20.430 BCM.



Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu - there are 42 reservoirs with a total live storage capacity of 53.334 BCM. The available storage is 7.317 BCM, or 14 per cent of the total capacity.

This is significantly lower than last year's 24 per cent and the normal storage of 19 per cent. The report highlights that better than normal storage is available in Ganga, Indus, Brahmaputra, Brahmani and Baitarani, Narmada, Tapi and the Sabarmati basins.

Storage levels are close to normal in Subarnarekha, Barak, Mahi, Godavari, Mahanadi, west flowing rivers of Kutch and Saurashtra, including Luni, west flowing rivers from Tapi to Tadril, and west flowing Rivers from Tadril to Kanyakumari.

However, deficient storage is reported in Krishna, east flowing rivers between Pennar and Kanyakumari and Cauvery basins, while highly deficient storage is noted in the east flowing rivers between Mahanadi and Pennar basins.

The available storage in the southern region is 7.317 BCM, or 14% of the total capacity lower than the normal storage of 19%

MALIWAL ASSAULT CASE

Bibhav Kumar sent to 14 days judicial custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: A court here Friday remanded Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar in judicial custody for 14 days, saying the investigation was still at a nascent stage and completing it would require time.

Kumar, personal assistant to Kejriwal, allegedly assaulted AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal at the Chief Minister's official residence May 13.

"I feel that investigation is at nascent stage and would require time to complete the investigation. In view of the submissions made by both the parties and facts of the case, accused Bibhav Kumar be remanded to judicial custody for 14 days and be produced June 14," Metropolitan Magistrate Gaurav Goyal said.

Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava submitted an application seeking judicial custody for Kumar for conducting a "proper investigation" and to prevent the accused from tampering with evidence or making any threat or inducement to the witnesses. Karan Sharma, the counsel for Kumar, opposed the Delhi Police's plea.

Earlier Monday, Kumar's bail plea was dismissed by a sessions court which said there appeared to be no "pre-meditation" by Maliwal in lodging the FIR and that her allegations could not be "swiped away".

Kumar was arrested May 18. He was sent to police custody for five days the same day by a magisterial court which observed that his anticipatory bail plea had become infructuous because of his arrest.

The FIR against Kumar was registered May 16 under various Indian Penal Code provisions, including for criminal intimidation, assault or criminal force on a woman with the intent to disrobe her and attempt to commit culpable homicide.

25 poll staff among 40 heat-related deaths



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mirzapur/Patna, May 31: India Friday reported at least 40 suspected heat-related deaths, 25 of them of staff deployed on Lok Sabha poll duty in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, as heatwave conditions gripped a large swathe of the country.

According to officials, heat-related deaths were reported from Odisha (10), Bihar (8), Jharkhand (4) and Uttar Pradesh (1) Thursday also. Rajasthan has reported at least five heat-related deaths so far.

Among the fatalities reported on Friday, the maximum 17 were from Uttar Pradesh, 14 from Bihar, five from Odisha and four from Jharkhand, where officials said more than 1,300 people are hospitalised with heatstroke conditions.

The soaring temperatures also caused water scarcity in some parts of the country including in Delhi where the residents faced continued acute shortages, with people in long queues struggling to secure enough to meet their daily needs.

Overall, the IMD said heatwave to severe heatwave conditions prevailed over many parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh; in some parts of Bihar, east Madhya Pradesh; in isolated pockets of Odisha, Jharkhand.

Heatwave conditions also prevailed in some parts of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Vidarbha, West Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Heat wave conditions have been prevailing over Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi.

These conditions are likely to abate during the next two-three days, the India Meteorological Department said the prevailing heatwave.

Meanwhile, officials in Uttar Pradesh -- where 13 seats including in Sonbhadra district and Mirzapur are going to polls Saturday -- said at least 15 election staff died after suspected heatstroke.

Officials in Uttar Pradesh's in Kaushambi said two people, including an elderly woman, died following heat stroke Thursday, at the district hospital. In neighbouring Bihar -- where eight Lok Sabha seats are voting on Saturday -- officials said fourteen people, including 10 polling personnel, have died due to heatstroke in the past two days.

Three election officials died in Rohtas, and one each died in Kaimur and Aurangabad districts, it said. Four other people died in different parts of the state, it added.

Due to the heatwave conditions, all schools, coaching institutes and anganwadi centres were shut till June 8.

Will surrender June 2: Kejriwal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Friday that he will be surrendering June 2 and, in an emotional appeal, asked the people to take care of his old and ailing parents after he is gone.

"I will leave my house around 3 pm (Sunday) to surrender. It is possible that this time they will torture me more, but I will not bow down," he said.

He assured the people of Delhi that all the facilities available to them will continue even in his absence. "You take care of yourself, I worry a lot about you in jail. If you are happy, your Kejriwal will also be happy."

"I will not be among you, of course, but you don't worry, all your work will continue... and after returning, I will also start giving ₹1,000 every month to every mother and sister," he said in a virtual press conference.

your work will continue... and after returning, I will also start giving ₹1,000 every month to every mother and sister," he said in a virtual press conference. Making an appeal to the Delhiites who stood by him in difficult times to look after his aged and ailing parents, he said he has always fulfilled his duty as a son "of your family".

"Today I want to ask something from you for my family. My parents are very old, my mother is very ill. I will worry a lot about her in jail."

"Take care of my parents after I am gone, pray for them, pray to God. Prayers have great power: If you pray for my mother daily, she will definitely remain healthy," he said.

"When difficult times come, the whole family comes together, you all have supported me a lot in difficult times. It is because of your prayers that I am alive today and your blessings will protect me in the future too. In the end, I just want to say that if God wishes, your son will come back very soon," he said.



Villagers stand near the flooded portion of a road following rains in the aftermath of Cyclone Remal in Hojai district, Assam

SURVIVAL AT 15,000 FEET

A tiny Himalayan village fights for water, jobs

AS TASHIGANG AND NEIGHBOURING GETE PREPARE TO VOTE SATURDAY IN THE LAST LAP OF THE SEVEN-PHASE ELECTIONS, THE DEMAND FOR JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS IN THE FACE OF DWINDLING AGRICULTURE RETURNS, WATER AND ROADS ECHO LOUD IN THE DESOLATE, RUGGED LANDSCAPE

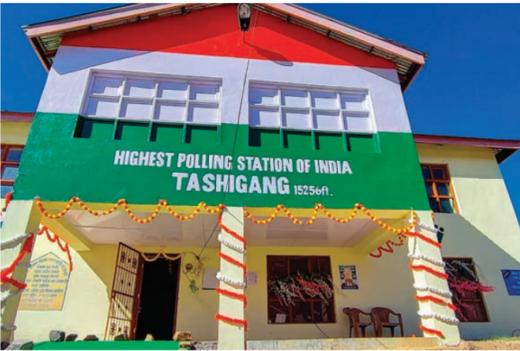
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tashigang (HP), May 31: Tucked high in the icy Himalayas at an altitude 15,256 feet, this small village, which houses the world's highest polling station serving just 62 voters, tells a tale of survival among the harshest odds and the many vagaries of climate change.

Kalzung Dolma, for instance, said she struggles to pay her daughter's school fees after losing her job with the state's Public Welfare Department, which paid her a "decent" ₹13,000 a month. Her family of six has reverted to agriculture, which was their primary source of income until Dolma joined the PWD's road construction team as a con-

tractual worker. They primarily grow peas but that is barely enough to make ends meet. "Pea production has plummeted from 100 gunny sacks a decade ago to 20-25 sacks now. As a result, we purchase less rations and consume less," Dolma told PTI.

Tashigang is part of the Spiti Valley, which is situated in a rain shadow area so there is little to no rainfall. People depend on glaciers and snowfall for water. However, the glaciers are retreating rapidly, and snowfall has been decreasing over the years, which experts say is a direct result of climate change. Located near the India-China border, Spiti Valley is part of the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, one



of the four parliamentary constituencies in Himachal Pradesh and the second largest in India. Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut is up against Congress' Vikramaditya Singh in the constituency. The polling station at

Tashigang, serving 62 voters from Tashigang and Gete, has been made a model polling booth.

According to Guman Singh of the NGO Himalayan Niti Abhiyan, streams and ponds that provide water for irrigation and domestic needs of the high-altitude villages like Tashigang and Gete are drying up fast due to increasing temperatures and inadequate snowfall.

The only source of rainfall and snowfall in the region is western disturbances (WD), low-pressure systems that travel from the Mediterranean region.

Tending to his yak, Tanzin Takpa, 54, said residents of Tashigang and neighbouring villages grow only green peas and barley during summer

months when temperatures range from 5 to 20 degrees Celsius.

Winters are harsh and inhospitable, with temperatures dropping as low as minus 35 degrees Celsius. The hills remain buried in snow, and the sole dirt road connecting Tashigang to Kaza is closed, confining families to their mud-and-brick homes for six months.

Takpa, whose son worked with the road construction team of the PWD, said a regular job would provide them with a steady income year-round.

With their demand to regularise their jobs falling on deaf ears, Takpa said families in Tashigang had decided to boycott the Lok Sabha elections.

international



The number of people fleeing their homes because of war, violence and persecution has reached 114 million and is climbing because nations have failed to tackle the causes and combatants are refusing to comply with international law

FILIPPO GRANDI | CHIEF, UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

COALITION CLOUDS BLANKET SA

Incumbent President Cyril Ramaphosa's African National Congress (ANC) party, which has ruled South Africa since the advent of democracy 30 years ago, is likely to lose its majority in the just-concluded polls, with a coalition government now most likely



of the day quote

You've seen a deepening of cooperation and ties between our militaries. The secretary has hosted delegations from India here in the Pentagon and, of course, travelled overseas to meet with his counterparts

SABRINA SINGH | DEPUTY PRESS SECRETARY, PENTAGON

War is a monster that is constantly hungry, it must be fed, and it must be fed with money. And I see that the Americans and the Democratic government of the United States, and the leaders of the European Union, are ready to feed it

VIKTOR ORBAN | PM, HUNGARY

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners and iron-clad friends. Our friendship stood the test of time and remains rock solid, steady as Mount Tai

MUMTAZ ZAHRA BALOCH | FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESPERSON, PAKISTAN

SHORT TAKES

9-yr-old Indian girl shot, critical

London: A nine-year-old girl, yet to be formally identified but believed to be from the southern Indian state of Kerala, is in a critical condition in hospital "fighting for her life" after suffering a gunshot wound in a drive-by shooting from a motorbike in east London. The Metropolitan Police said the girl was inside a restaurant in the Kingsland High Street area of Hackney having dinner with her family when the shooting occurred Wednesday night. Three as yet unnamed men, aged 26, 37 and 42, who were sitting outside the restaurant were taken to hospital for treatment for gunshot wounds and their conditions are said to be "stable, but one potentially faces life changing injuries".

US-UK hit Yemen

Dubai: Joint British-US airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels killed at least 16 people and wounded 35 others, the rebels said Friday, the highest publicly acknowledged death toll by the rebels from the multiple rounds of strikes carried out over their attacks on shipping. Three US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe a then-ongoing attack, described the strikes Thursday as hitting a wide range of underground facilities, missile launchers, command and control sites, a Houthi vessel and other facilities.

Republicans rally behind Trump

DONALD TRUMP BECOMES THE FIRST FORMER US PRESIDENT TO BE CONVICTED OF A CRIME -- 34 FELONY COUNTS OF FALSIFYING BUSINESS RECORDS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, May 31: Republicans rallied behind former US president Donald Trump who Thursday was convicted of a felony as a grand jury in New York found him guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records.

This made him the first former president to be convicted of a felony.

The jury found that the 77-year-old presumptive Republican presidential candidate, falsified the records in a scheme to influence his 2016 presidential election through hush money payments to a porn actor who had said she had sex with Trump. Cutting across internal party divisions, the Republicans rallied around Trump as the jurors unanimously reached a verdict in the hush money criminal case.

"This will backfire," said Indian-American Vivek

Ramaswamy, who over the past few months has emerged as a close aide and confidant of Trump.

"The prosecutor is a politician who promised to nail Trump. The judge's daughter is a Democrat operative who literally 'raised dollars from the trial' while her father presided over it. The jury instructions said they didn't have to agree on the crime to convict," he said.

"Dems could have saved a lot of time by announcing the verdict first, and then having the trial," said former Indian-American Governor Bobby Jindal from Louisiana.

"Pretty neat trick that the same Dem DA who makes violent felonies disappear conjured up these felonies," he said.

House Speaker Mike Johnson described it as a shameful day in American history. "This was

a purely political exercise, not a legal one. The weaponisation of our justice system has been a hallmark of the Biden administration, and the decision today is further evidence that Democrats will stop at nothing to silence dissent and crush their political opponents," he said.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said extremist Democrats have undermined democracy by weaponising the courts to operate like a banana republic that targets their political opponents.

"Today's verdict is a defeat for Americans who believe in the critical legal tenet that justice is blind. It was clear from the start that Biden teamed up with heavily biased DA Alvin

Bragg to go after his political opponent regardless of wrongdoing — while hardened criminals are set free in New York to commit more violent crimes against innocent citizens," he said.

He alleged that this is nothing more than an attempt to interfere with the 2024 election. "The radical Democrats behind this

abuse of our justice system will not prevail. The voters will settle this on November 5th," he said.



Dems savour verdict

WASHINGTON: Democratic lawmakers are cheering the guilty verdict against former President Trump as a win for the rule of law and a potential political windfall.

Biden's campaign said the verdict showed that no one was above the law and urged voters to reject Trump in the election. "There is still only one way to keep Donald Trump out of the Oval Office: at the ballot box," the campaign said in a statement.

"What no one knows yet is what independent and swing voters are going to do," said Chris Kofinis, a Democratic strategist who has worked on multiple presidential campaigns.

Several House Democrats reacted to the ruling with jubilation, with one senior lawmaker saying in a text, "Justice!!!!!!"

Greg Landsman, Democrat representative from Ohio said, "He's now a convicted felon... Many voters will be unwilling to vote for a convicted felon for President of

the United States." Another Democrat representative from California Robert Garcia said the presidential race will be a contrast between "a decent, good man" and a "convicted criminal," adding, "We're gonna hit that home."

The party's campaign apparatus is already using Trump's new "convicted felon" status to try to whack vulnerable Republicans.

Some Democrats were also split on whether Biden might get a bump from the verdict, with some seeing genuine upside to Trump's troubles and others expressing more doubt.

"This is the result we wanted and is another talking point against Trump but doesn't mean a lot for actual votes," said a Biden campaign official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to give an assessment without fear of retribution.

There is simply no precedent for a convicted candidate's carrying a major party's banner into a general election. Many political experts say it is too early to tell whether the outcome will add fuel to Trump's campaign or make it toxic to persuadable voters.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Sentencing: Trump is to be sentenced July 11 at 10:00 am, just days ahead of the Republican National Convention where he is expected to be named the party's presidential nominee. Trump faces up to four years in prison on each of the 34 felony counts but as a first-time offender, he is unlikely to face jail time. A fine, probation, home confinement or community service are far more likely options, according to legal experts.

Appeal: Trump's defense attorneys have 30 days to appeal the verdict once sentencing has taken place and they are expected to do so. An appeal is unlikely to be heard, however, before the November presidential election, when Trump is expected to take on Democrat Joe Biden in a rematch of their 2020 contest.

Campaign: Despite the felony conviction, Trump can still run for the White House, be elected and once again take the oath of office. He would not be able to pardon himself, however, given that the case was brought not by the federal government but by the state of New York, where only the governor could clear his name.

Supporters call for riots, violent retribution

Supporters of former President Donald Trump, enraged by his conviction on 34 felony counts by a New York jury, flooded Trump websites with calls for riots, revolution and violent retribution. After Trump became the first US president to be convicted of a crime, his supporters responded with dozens of violent online posts, according to a Reuters review of comments on three Trump-aligned websites: the former president's own Truth Social platform, Patriots.Win and the Gateway Pundit. Some called for attacks on jurors, the execution of the judge, Justice

Juan Merchan, or outright civil war and armed insurrection. "Someone in NY with nothing to lose needs to take care of Merchan," wrote one commentator on Patriots.Win. "Hopefully he gets met with illegals with a machete," the post said in reference to illegal immigrants. On Gateway Pundit, one poster suggested shooting liberals after the verdict. "Time to start capping some leftys," said the post. "This cannot be fixed by voting." Threats of violence and intimidating rhetoric soared after Trump lost the 2020 election and falsely claimed the vote was stolen.



MISSILE MANIA: This undated photo provided Friday by the North Korean government, shows what it says firing drills at an undisclosed place in North Korea

Indian-American Soma bags Spelling Bee title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oxon Hill, May 31: Bruhat Soma was unbeatable before he arrived at the Scripps National Spelling Bee, and neither the dictionary, nor his competitors, nor a lightning-round tiebreaker challenged him on the way to victory.

Bruhat spelled 29 words correctly in the tiebreaker, beating Faizan Zaki by nine, to win the title Thursday night. He receives a trophy and more than \$50,000 in cash and prizes.



Israel completes combat ops in part of north Gaza

As the war has dragged on and Gaza's infrastructure has been widely demolished, malnutrition has spread among the 2.3mn population as aid deliveries have slowed to a trickle, and the UN has warned of incipient famine

REUTERS

Jerusalem, May 31: Israeli forces have ended operations in north Gaza's Jabalia area after days of intense fighting and over 200 airstrikes, while probing further into Rafah in south Gaza, targeting what they say is the last major redoubt of Hamas battalions.

Israeli troops found caches of rocket launchers and other weapons, as well as Hamas tunnel shafts in the centre of Rafah, the military said Friday, pressing an offensive to break up militant combat units it says are hunkered down in the city on the border with Egypt.

In a statement on more than two weeks of fierce fighting in Jabalia, the Israeli military said troops had completed their operation and withdrawn to prepare

for other operations in Gaza. During the operation, troops recovered the bodies of seven of the 250 hostages Hamas-led militants abducted when they stormed over the border into Israel October 7 last year and killed around 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies.

Since then, at least 36,284 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's air and land war in Gaza, its health ministry said in an update Friday, and much of the densely populated enclave lies in ruins.

Israel will not agree to any halt in fighting that is not part of a deal that includes the return of surviving hostages, a senior Israeli security official said Friday. Hamas had said Thursday that it would be ready for an accord, including an exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, as long as the Israelis stopped the war.

In Jabalia, a crowded urban district populated by refugees from the 1948 war of Israel's founding and their descendants, Hamas turned the "civilian area into a fortified combat compound", the Israeli military said. It said Israeli troops killed hundreds of militants in close-quarter combat and seized large caches of weaponry and destroyed rocket launchers primed for use.



Ukraine on course to use Western arms in Russia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, May 31: President Joe Biden has given Ukraine the go-ahead to use American weaponry to strike inside Russia for the limited purpose of defending Kharkiv, according to two US officials familiar with the matter.

The officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, underscored that the US policy calling on Ukraine not to use American-provide long-range missiles and other munitions to strike inside Russia offensively has not changed.

The move comes as Ukrainian officials have stepped up calls on the US administration to allow its forces to defend itself against attacks originating from Russian territory.

Biden's decision was first reported by Politico.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken Thursday assailed Russian attempts to sow discord



in democracies with misinformation after hinting the Biden administration may soon allow Ukraine to use American-supplied munitions to strike inside Russia.

With an increasing number of officials saying Ukraine must be able to defend itself by attacking targets in Russian territory, Blinken joined NATO foreign ministers for a meeting in Prague, where he said Moscow's use of misinformation and disinformation was a "poison" and signed an agreement with the Czech government to combat it. He also toured a Czech mili-

tary base, where he saw armoured vehicles that Prague is sending to Kyiv to help fight Russia's invasion and received a briefing on a Czech initiative to supply Ukraine with a million rounds of ammunition by the end of the year.

"We know that a major front in the competition that we have, the adversarial relationship that we have, notably with Russia, is on the information front," Blinken said.

He said the agreement with the Czechs — the 17th such accord the US has signed with partner nations — would help "to effectively deal with misinformation

Berlin follows US

Kyiv: The German government said Friday that Ukraine can use German-supplied weapons against Russian attacks from positions just over their joint border, in a significant policy change that came a day after US President Joe Biden gave Kyiv a green light to strike back with American weapons at Russian military assets targeting the country's second-largest city. A German government statement noted that, in recent weeks, Russia has prepared, coordinated and carried out attacks on Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region in particular from areas just over the border in Russia. "Together we are convinced that Ukraine has the right under international law to defend itself against these attacks," the statement said.

and disinformation, which is a poison being injected into our democracies by our adversaries".

business

of the day quote

To further improve quality systems in India, India should adopt and align its standards with international ones to enhance export competitiveness and seek international accreditation for BIS certifications to avoid additional costs for manufacturers

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

Visibility on meaningful tariff hikes remains uncertain, since globally also 5G has not yielded any major tariff premium over 4G tariffs

PRIVANKA BANSAL | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, IND-RA

In the coming years, India will emerge as a hub for green energy and a leading exporter of sustainable energy solutions with these guidelines being a norm for companies to comply

RAJIV AGARWAL | MD & CEO, ESSAR PORTS

SHORT TAKES

Vedanta EBITDA up

London: Vedanta Resources, the parent company of India-listed mining group, posted its second highest ever consolidated EBITDA of \$4.7 billion for FY24, a year which its chairman Anil Agarwal described as "pivotal year" that will result in "a strong Vedanta." Revenue (before special items) for the year at \$17.1 billion was 6 per cent lower than \$18.1 billion of the previous year "primarily driven by lower output commodity prices primarily of aluminium, zinc and bauxite, partially offset by higher volume at aluminium, copper and iron ore business," the conglomerate said in a statement on its website. It posted the second highest ever consolidated EBITDA of \$4.7 billion, 2 per cent higher year-on-year (FY 2022-23: \$4.6 billion). "This was mainly due to softening of input commodity prices coupled with strategic cost savings, one time arbitration award in oil and gas business which is partially offset by slip in commodity prices primarily of aluminium, zinc and bauxite and strategic hedging gain recognised in previous year."

Adani profit jumps

New Delhi: Adani group saw a 55 per cent profit surge in the fiscal year ended March 2024 as the apples-to-airport conglomerate is back on an expansion spree and eyeing a \$90 billion capex over the next decade. Emerging from a damning report of a US short seller, which hit market value of its listed companies, Adani group in 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024) fiscal focused on containing debt, reducing founder share pledge and consolidating business in core competencies. This helped net profit surge to Rs 30,767 crore for the group's listed companies in the fiscal from Rs 19,833 crore a year ago.

Production of iron ore rises in April

New Delhi: The production of iron ore increased 4 per cent to 26 million tonne (MT) and the output of limestone also went up marginally by 2.1 per cent to 39.3 million tonne in April. Iron ore and limestone together account for about 80 per cent of the total mineral production by value. In the first month of 2024-25, there is a steady increase in the production of these minerals as compared to the production in the corresponding month last year, the mines ministry said in a statement. Production of iron ore has increased from 25 million tonne during April 2023 to 26 million tonne during April 2024, registering a growth of 4 per cent. Production of limestone has increased from 38.5 MT during April 2023 to 39.3 MT in April 2024.

Adani Ports arm signs 30-yr pact to operate Tanzania Port Terminal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) Friday said its subsidiary company has signed a 30-year concession agreement with the Tanzania Ports Authority to operate and manage a terminal at the Dar es Salaam Port in the east African country.

The Dar es Salaam Port is a gateway port with a well-connected network of roadways and railways, and concession agreement signed by Adani International Ports Holdings Pte Ltd (AIPH) marks the entry of Adani Ports into Tanzania. Adani Ports-led consortium will acquire the project company in Tanzania, which houses all port handling equipment and employees, for an amount of \$39.5 million, APSEZ said.

East Africa Gateway Ltd (EAGL) has been incorporated as a joint venture of AIPH, AD Ports Group, and East Harbour Terminals Ltd (EHTL), the statement added.

APSEZ will be the controlling shareholder and will consolidate EAGL on its books, it said.

According to the statement, EAGL has signed a share purchase agreement for the acquisition of 95 per cent stake in Tanzania International Container Terminal Services Limited (TICTS) from Hutchison Port Holdings Limited (and its affiliate Hutchison Port Investments Limited) and Harbours Investment Limited for a purchase consideration of \$39.5 million.

"TICTS currently owns all the port handling equipment and employs the manpower," the statement said, adding that Adani will operate CT2 through TICTS Container Terminal 2, with four berths, has an annual cargo handling capacity of 1 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) and managed 0.82 million TEUs of containers in 2023 - about 83 per cent of Tanzania's total container volumes.

APSEZ managing director Karan Adani said that the signing of the concession for Container Terminal 2 at Dar es Salaam Port is in line with APSEZ's ambition of becoming one of the largest port operators globally by 2030.

"We are confident that with our expertise and network in ports and logistics, we will be able to enhance trade volumes and economic cooperation between our ports and East Africa. We will strive to transform Dar es Salaam Port into a world class port," Adani added.



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INDIA BRINGS BACK 100MT OF GOLD FROM UK

This is one of the biggest movements of gold undertaken by the country since 1991

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 31: India has moved 100 metric tonne of its gold stored in the UK to domestic vaults in FY24, sources said Friday.

This is one of the biggest movements of gold undertaken by the country since 1991, when pledging a substantial part of the gold holding to tide over a foreign exchange crisis resulted in its movement out of vaults.

The country's overall gold

holding increased 27.46 metric tonne in FY24 and it stands at 822 metric tonne, as per official data.

A substantial part of the precious commodity is stored abroad, the sources said, adding that India also had its holding with the Bank of England like other countries.

The movement of 100 metric tonne into India has taken the

overall quantity stored locally to over 408 metric tonne of gold,

which means the local and foreign holding is now split almost evenly.

As per the annual report of the central bank for FY24 released Thursday, over 308 metric tonne of gold is held in India as

backing for notes issued, while another 100.28 tonne is held locally as an asset of the banking department.

Of the overall gold reserves, 413.79 metric tonne are held abroad, the annual report said. According to the sources, given the gold buying over the last few years, a call was taken to reduce the holding abroad which is part of the standard review procedures.

In 2009, India had bought 200 tonne of gold from the

International Monetary Fund, after which it has been buying the precious commodity from the secondary market as part of its foreign exchange asset diversification efforts.

Officials from the Ministry of Finance, the RBI and other agencies took care of the movement of gold in complete secrecy given the high value, as per the sources.

At present, the gold held locally is stored at high security vaults and facilities in Mumbai and Nagpur, the sources added.

BETTER TAX MOP-UP

Fiscal deficit improves



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: The central government's fiscal deficit during 2023-24 at 5.6 per cent of the GDP was better than previous estimates of 5.8 per cent on account of higher revenue realisation and lower expenditure, according to official data released Friday.

In actual terms, the fiscal deficit -- or gap between expenditure and revenue -- was Rs 16.53 lakh crore, or 5.63 per cent of the GDP, which grew 8.2 per cent in 2023-24.

In the revised estimate for 2023-24, the government had in the interim Budget presented in Parliament on February 1 projected the fiscal deficit of Rs 17.34 lakh crore, or 5.8 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

According to the data released by the Controller General of India (CGA), the government's revenue collection was 101.2 per cent of the revised estimates (RE) presented in the Budget.

Net tax collection was Rs 23.26 lakh crore in the financial year ending March 2024.

The expenditure worked out to be Rs 44.42 lakh crore. The expenditure during the last fiscal was 98.9 per cent of the RE.

CGA data also showed that revenue deficit during FY24 was 2.6 per cent of the GDP and effective revenue deficit was 1.6 per cent of the GDP.

Commenting on the data, ICRA Chief Economist Aditi

Nayar said the government's fiscal deficit was contained below the RE for FY24, benefiting from higher-than-anticipated receipts and lower than estimated revenue spending, with only a marginal miss in capital expenditure.

Vivek Jalan, Partner at Tax Connect Advisory Services LLP, a multi-disciplinary consulting firm, said lower fiscal deficit is majorly due to the uptick in tax revenues.

"The encouraging fiscal deficit numbers can be dedicated to the taxpayers of the country. The efficiency of the CBDT and CBIC and especially the ground covered in implementation of Artificial intelligence in unearthing fake transactions have also to be appreciated by honest taxpayers," he said.

For the current financial year (2024-25), the government estimates the fiscal deficit at 5.1 per cent of the GDP, or Rs 16,85,494 crore.

As per the Fiscal Responsibility & Budget Management (FRBM) Act, the government plans to achieve a

fiscal deficit of 4.5 per cent in 2025-26.

During 2023-24, the government received Rs 27,88,872 crore (101.2 per cent of corresponding RE of total receipts) comprising Rs 23,26,524 crore tax revenue (net to Centre), Rs 4,01,888 crore of non-tax revenue and Rs 60,460 crore of non-debt capital receipts.

According to CGA data, Rs 11,29,494 crore was transferred to state governments as devolution of share of taxes by the Government of India, an increase of Rs 1,81,088 crore year-on-year.

Total expenditure incurred by the central government was Rs 44,42,542 crore (98.9 per cent of corresponding RE of 2023-24), of which Rs 34,94,036 crore was on revenue account and Rs 9,48,506 crore on capital account.

Of the total revenue expenditure, Rs 10,63,871 crore was towards interest payments and Rs 4,13,542 crore on account of major subsidies.

Meanwhile, according to another CGA data, the fiscal deficit in April was 12.5 per cent of the Budget Estimate (BE) for 2024-25, or Rs 2.1 lakh crore. It was 7.5 per cent of BE 2023-24 in April 2023.

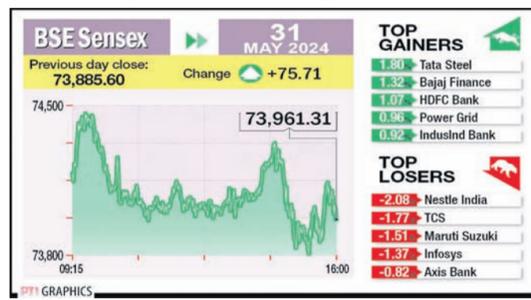
Nayar said while the fiscal deficit for April 2024 has spiked on account of an unexpected surge in revenue spending, in spite of healthy tax revenues, the higher-than-budgeted dividend from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to dampen the fiscal deficit in the rest of this quarter.

Overall, the fiscal dynamics appear favourable for FY25, amid continued resilience in GST collections and an unexpectedly large dividend payout by the RBI, she added.

Enthusied by higher GDP number and improvement in fiscal situation, the government may lower fiscal deficit target below 5.1 per cent of GDP for the current fiscal when full Budget for FY25 is presented in July, sources said.

VALUE BUYING

Stock markets snap 5-day losing streak



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 31: Stock markets snapped the five-day losing run Friday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 75 points on value-buying and investors turning their focus on exit polls to be released after the close of the last phase of elections June 1.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 75.71 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 73,961.31. During the session, it hit a high of 74,478.89 points and a low of 73,765.15 points.

Halting its five-day losing streak, the 50-share NSE Nifty rose by 42.05 or 0.19 per cent to end at 22,530.70. Nifty and Sensex tanked more than 2 per cent in the five days to Thursday amid high volatility ahead of the results of the Lok Sabha polls.

"The pre-election trading strategy has come to an end, and all eyes will be on the release of the exit poll for further action. Regional diversions, marginally low voter turnout and strong resistance at current range are prompting investors to adopt a cautious stance," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Larsen & Toubro, ICICI Bank were among the gainers.

Nestle India, Tata Consultancy Services Maruti Suzuki India,

Infosys, Axis Bank, Hindustan Unilever were the laggards.

The BSE midcap gauge ended flat, while smallcap index gained 0.76 per cent.

Among the indices, utilities climbed 2.10 per cent, Realty 2.02 per cent, Power 1.80 per cent, Services 1.60 per cent, metal rose 1.28 per cent, Telecommunication 1.18 per cent.

Information Technology fell 0.99 per cent, Teck (0.84 per cent), Healthcare (0.55 per cent), Auto (0.32 per cent) and FMCG (0.21 per cent) were the losers.

As many as 2,099 stocks declined while 1,732 advanced and 84 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"The Nifty remained volatile within a narrow range during the day as investors awaited the election results. The highest call writing is visible at 23,000, while there is significant put writing at 22,500, indicating that the Nifty might oscillate between 22,500 and 23,000 in the next few days," Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst, LKP Securities said.

In Asian markets, Shanghai, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong were closed on a mixed note. European stock markets were trading lower. Major indices on Wall Street ended lower Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude went lower 0.40 per cent to \$81.53 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,050.15 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

JioCinema IPL creates a streaming record of 62cr

THE IPL VIEWERSHIP ON JIOCINEMA SPIKES 53% IN 2024



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: Reliance-owned OTT platform JioCinema, which has live streaming rights for Tata IPL, saw a 53 per cent growth in viewership at 2,600 crore views in the T20 cricket tournament that concluded May 26.

This was the second season of IPL for JioCinema, in which the platform recorded over 35,000 crore minutes of watch-time, the OTT platform said in a statement.

Moreover, the average time spent per viewer touched 75 minutes from over 60 from the last season of Tata IPL 2023.

"Keeping the momentum going after an incredible opening night, JioCinema's reach grew over 38 per cent, concluding the season at over 62 crore," it said.

This season, JioCinema had a record 28 sponsors and over 1,400 advertisers.

"We conclude the TATA IPL 2024 with a promise to continue to redefine the way sports is con-

sumed in India," said a Viacom18 Spokesperson, adding, "The growth we are seeing year-on-year assures us that our viewer-centric presentation is engaged with and appreciated".

JioCinema opened the 2024 season with over 11.3 crore viewers on the first day, 51 per cent higher than Day 1 of TATA IPL 2023.

"As JioCinema commenced their second season on digital, over 59 crore video views were registered on the platform for the opening day of TATA IPL 2024 which led to 660 crore minutes of watch-time," it said.

Reliance-backed Viacom18 acquired the digital rights for IPL for Rs 20,500 crore in June 2022.

The television rights for the Indian subcontinent is with Disney Star, which is yet to come with its final number of viewers.

After this, JioCinema will focus on the next sports event - the 2024 Paris Olympics, it added.

Infrastructure output rises 6.2% YoY in April

REUTERS

New Delhi, May 31: India's infrastructure output in April rose 6.2 per cent year-on-year, compared with a revised 6 per cent growth in March, government data showed Friday, backed by strong electricity and steel output.

Infrastructure output, which accounts for 40 per cent of industrial production, measures activity in eight sectors, including refinery products and electricity.

Coal production grew 7.5 per cent, while electricity generation rose 9.4 per cent. In March, coal production rose 8.7 per cent and electricity generation grew

Acclimatisation key to success: Rohit

Skipper, head coach Dravid happy with pitch and conditions at Nassau County stadium



Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid inspected the pitch at the Nassau County stadium Friday and were satisfied FILE PHOTO

AGENCIES

New York, May 31: Captain of the Indian cricket team, Rohit Sharma is excited about playing at a completely new venue, the Nassau County stadium, when India face Ireland in their T20 World Cup opener June 5. Prior to that, Rohit and his soldiers will have a chance to test out the conditions at the new venue when they take on Bangladesh in their only warm-up tie.

Rohit and head coach Rahul Dravid were among the first people to arrive at the stadium Friday. They had a look at the

the need for his side to get into a 'rhythm' before the real action starts, and he wanted to use this side game as a springboard.

"(We will) try and make the most of the conditions, get used to what it's going to be like June 5 when we play our first game," he informed. "It's just about getting into that rhythm of getting the feel of the ground, pitch and stuff like that," he added.

Moving beyond the match routines, Rohit also found time to take in the beauty of the venue. "It looks beautiful. It's quite an open ground. I just can't wait to feel the atmosphere in the stadium when we play our first game. It has a decent capacity as well and hopefully fans will throng the venue for our matches," Rohit stated.

"People in New York will be very interested in coming and watching the World Cup, as it is happening for the first time here. And there are a lot of Indian expats," added the Indian skipper.

The worry for the Indian think-tank is who among Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj will partner Jasprit Bumrah as second frontline pacer. Both have been blown hot and cold in the recently-concluded IPL and in the absence of Mohammed Shami, the team management is hoping that both come good.

Former India pacer RP Singh said Friday that on the drop-in pitches, Arshdeep would be more useful than Siraj because of his variations.

"As per my understanding, there should be a bit of slowness in the wicket. Hence bowlers with better variations will be successful," RP stated during an event in Delhi.

“We need to get into a rhythm, adjust ourselves to the conditions before the actual tournament starts”

ROHIT SHARMA

the players need to get used to day-time matches after playing under lights in the IPL for the last two months.

"We're looking to understand the conditions more importantly (before the tournament proper) as we haven't been here before," Rohit was quoted as saying by the 'ICC'. The Mumbai-based emphasised

HARMANPREET RUES LACK OF CONSISTENCY

CAPTAIN FEELS LONDON PRO LEAGUE GAMES VITAL FOR OLYMPIC PREPARATIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 31: India men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh feels his side are playing good hockey but only in patches and this will have to be ironed out in the upcoming FIH Pro League games here as the team prepare for the ultimate test at the Paris Olympics.

India are currently third in the table with 21 points from 12 matches. Harmanpreet's side will take on Germany and Great Britain, sixth and ninth on the charts, in the decisive London leg of the Pro League, which commences here Saturday. India will first take on the Germans.

India are coming into the London leg of the Pro League on the back of a mixed performance in Antwerp, Belgium where they won two hard-fought matches against Argentina and lost an equal number of games to the hosts.

"We played scintillating hockey in some moments while we struggled in a few others, but the players are constantly improving," Harmanpreet said in a Hockey India (HI) release Friday.

"We also used this opportunity to give some match experience to the younger players in the squad and improve our overall chemistry," Harmanpreet added.

The skipper added that playing the tough matches against Argentina and Belgium will help

the side. "We played some intense matches against Argentina and Belgium in Antwerp, both in the same pool as us in the Paris 2024 Olympics. The aim in these upcoming matches (in London) will be to get out of our

blocks early, work on our combinations and positioning to make sure we play to the best of our abilities," Harmanpreet pointed out.

The Indian skipper asserted that it was absolutely necessary to do

well here to be ready for the Paris Olympics.

"We are aware that the London stage of Pro League will be crucial in our preparations for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics, hence we are looking forward to taking on Germany and Great Britain," Harmanpreet said.

Following Saturday's game, India will again take on Germany again June 8. They will play Great Britain June 2 and 9.

Indian women's team hockey captain Salima Tete said the side are in a 'rebuilding phase' after failing to qualify for the Olympics and the Pro League matches here will give the team much-needed boost. They will also face Germany and Great Britain here.



SHORT TAKES

Laura to lead SA eves against India

Johannesburg: Top-order batter Laura Wolvaardt was named Friday as captain of South Africa's Test and ODI teams for the tour of India, beginning June 16. The tour will start with three ODIs in Bangalore before the visitors move to Chennai for one-off Test. The Proteas will be without the services of experienced Lara Goodall (hamstring injury), Chloe Tryon (back) and Ayanda Hlubi (groin), as they are currently under recuperation. Interim coach Dillon du Preez said negating Indian spinners has been an important part of their preparation for the tour.

Lamichhane's visa application rejected

Kathmandu: Nepal's ace leg-spinner Sundeep Lamichhane was ruled out of the Twenty20 World Cup Friday after his US visa application was rejected for a second time. The Nepalese government and its cricket authorities took up Lamichhane's case after his visa was first rejected last week.

"Despite taking necessary initiatives ... the US Embassy has expressed its inability to give travel permission (visa) to national player Lamichhane to play the World Cup," officials said. It should be stated that Lamichhane was recently acquitted in a rape case filed against him by an 18-year-old.

Cavani retires

Buenos Aires: Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani announced his retirement from international soccer Thursday, three weeks before the start of the Copa America football tournament. The 37-year-old Cavani, a mainstay for Uruguay for the past two decades, had been selected by coach Marcelo Bielsa to play in the tournament which starts June 20 in the United States. "I decided to step aside, but I will follow you with my beating heart forever in the same way that I used to do when I got to play with this beautiful shirt," the Boca Juniors striker said in a message posted on Instagram. Cavani scored 58 goals in 136 matches for Uruguay.

Women's team lose

Tashkent: The Indian women's football team conceded their second half goals to suffer a 0-3 loss to Uzbekistan in the first international friendly at the Bunyodkor Stadium here Friday.

After a goalless first half, striker Khabibulaeva Deora struck a hat-trick to notch up a comfortable victory for the hosts. In the first half however, the Indian eves put up a gritty display.

Mixed day for Indian siblings

Vaishali wins to go to the top of the points table, but Praggnanandhaa loses to Nakamura



R Vaishali contemplates a move during her match against Pia Cramling PHOTO X

AGENCIES

Stavanger (Norway), May 31: Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali continued her dream run to defeat veteran GM Pia Cramling of Sweden, while her brother R Praggnanandhaa went down fighting against Hikaru Nakamura of USA in the fourth round of the Norway Chess tournament here.

Vaishali stretched her lead to 2.5 points following her second win under 'Classical' time control format. The Indian now has 8.5 points in her kitty and is followed by women's World Champion Wenjun Ju of China and Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine.

Muzychuk defeated Koneru Humpy for her first win in the tournament while Wenjun got the better of compatriot Tingjie Lei in the 'Armageddon' format.

With six rounds still remaining in the six-player double round-robin tournament, Lei stands fourth on five points, two points clear of Humpy and Cramling.

In the men's section, World No.1 Magnus Carlsen grinded down arch-rival Fabiano Caruana of United States on a day that witnessed all decisive games under 'Classical' format. In the other game of the day, Firouzja Alireza of France put it across reign-

ing World Champion Ding Liren of China.

At the end of the fourth round, Nakamura leads the men's section with seven points. He enjoys a half point lead over Alireza. Carlsen is third with six points to his credit while Praggnanandhaa slipped to fourth position on 5.5 points.

Vaishali won thanks to her perseverance out of a drawn rook and pawns endgame. Playing the black side of a Grunfeld defense, the Chennai-based GM had little trouble equalising and the players arrived at a heavy piece endgame in almost no time.

Cramling had to solve her pawn structure problem a bit and this is where Vaishali thought she had a chance. The game was still within the boundaries of a draw when Cramling blundered and found herself staring at a lost rook and pawns endgame. The game lasted 54 moves.

In the men's section, Nakamura capitalised on some unforced errors from Praggnanandhaa. The 'Nimzo Indian' defense adopted by Praggnanandhaa resulted in a dynamic balance but he got too optimistic in the resulting middle game and sacrificed a knight. The compensation, however, was not enough and Nakamura converted his extra material into a full point after 86 moves.

Treesa-Gayatri in semis

SHUTTLERS CONTINUE THEIR GIANT-KILLING ACT

AGENCIES

Singapore, May 31: Rising Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand registered yet another upset win as they beat the sixth-seeded South Korean duo of Kim So Yeong and Kong Hee Yong in a tight contest to enter the semifinals of the Singapore Open badminton tournament here Friday. The unseeded Indian duo came back from behind to notch an 18-21, 21-19, 24-22 win in the quarterfinal which lasted one hour and 19 minutes.

The World No. 30 Indian duo thus made amends of their defeat to the same opponents at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. The Commonwealth Games bronze medallist duo of Treesa and Gayatri had stunned World No.2 Korean pair of Baek Ha Na and Lee So Hee in the round of 16. They will now be up against fourth-seeded Japanese pair of



Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida in the semifinals Saturday.

Treesa and Gayatri are the only Indians in the fray for a podium finish in the BWF World Tour Super 750 event.

The third game between the Indians and the Koreans was indeed a very tight affair with the lead changing hands frequently. Even though, the Indians led, 11-9 at the interval, it was the Koreans who had match point at 20-19. However, Gayatri saved it with a beautiful drop shot and then the Koreans committed two unforced errors to pave the way for an Indian victory.

Aparajita named fair play expert



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 31: International Chess Federation (FIDE) has appointed Odisha's Aparajita Gochhikar who is an international chess player to be the fair play expert (FPE) for the World Junior Chess Championships 2024 at Gandhinagar in Gujarat. The tournament will be played June 1 to 14, FIDE officials said in a release Friday. Aparajita has already left for the venue.

The tournament is being organised by FIDE, the All India Chess Federation with the support of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.

Aparajita has already been a representative in World Chess Federation Fair Play Panel during the FIDE Chess Olympiad 2022 at Chennai and the World Youth Chess Championships 2023 in Italy. Debabrata Bhatta, the honorary secretary of the All Odisha Chess Association congratulated Aparajita on her new achievement and wished her success in her future endeavours.

Ministry clears Neeraj, Vinesh's training stints

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 31: The Sports Ministry approved Thursday reigning Olympic and World Champion Neeraj Chopra's plan to train in Europe for 60 days along with coach Klaus Bartonietz and physio Ishaan Marwaha as preparations for the upcoming Paris Games. Chopra will be training at different venues in Europe May 29 to July 28.

The Ministry's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) also agreed to Asian Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat's proposal to include strength and conditioning coach Wayne Patrick Lombard for the international training camp in Hungary from June 10 to 21.

The financial assistance under TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme) will be covering airfare, accommodation, meals, medical insurance, local transport expenses apart from out-of-pocket allowances as per Sports Authority of India (SAI) norms.

Vinesh, who will be competing in 50kg division in Paris, had requested for assistance towards Lombard's airfare, visa fees, board and lodging and local transport in Hungary.

She will be competing in the United World Wrestling 2nd Ranking Series - 'Polyak Imre & Varga Janos Memorial' from June 6 to 9 in Budapest.

The MOC also cleared the TOPS wrestler's proposal for support to compete in Grand Prix of Spain from July 5 to 7 in Madrid. Her support team will include physiotherapist Ashwini Jeevan Patil, sparring partner Arvind and coach Woller Akos.

Long jumper, shooters and shuttlers' proposal too were approved. Long jumper Shailli Singh's proposal to extend her training camp in Europe to June 23 was also approved by the MOC. Shailli will be training in Lisbon, Paris, Athens and Geneva along with coach Bobby George.

The MOC also cleared the request from shotgun shooters Rajeshwari Kumari and Maheshwari Chauhan to take their personal coaches to the training camp in Italy in June.

The MOC also okayed a request from shuttler HS Prannoy for financial assistance to engage trainer Rohan George Mathews on a full-time basis from June 20 to July 22 at Hyderabad.



NISHANT SEALS OLYMPICS SPOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, May 31: Nishant Dev (71kg) became the first Indian male pugilist to secure a Paris Games quota when he reached the semifinals of the Boxing Olympic qualifiers here Friday.

The World Championships bronze medallist, who had narrowly missed on an Olympic berth in the previous qualifiers, earned the quota after defeating Vasile Cebotari of Moldova 5-0 in the quarterfinal which was a battle of the southpaws.

It is India's fourth quota place with women boxers Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preet Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) having already secured their passage to Paris.

Earlier, India's quest for booking a quota in the women's 60kg ended with Ankushita Boro's 2-3 defeat against Agnes Alexiussion of Sweden in the quarterfinals.

Rublev falls, Swiatek, Sinner win

AGENCIES

Paris, May 31: Top see Iga Swiatek and third seed Coco Gauff remained on clash course at the French Open tennis tournament carving out impressive wins over the respective rivals here Friday. Swiatek swept away the challenge of Czech player Marie Bouzkova 6-4, 6-2 in a match that lasted 95 minutes while Gauff demolished Australian Open semifinalist Dayana Yastremska 6-2, 6-4.

After several seeded players in the women's segment were knocked out of the tournament, Italy's Elisabetta Cocciaretto pulled off another upset by defeating No. 17 Liudmila Samsonova 7-6 (7-4), 6-2 on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Cocciaretto, ranked No 51, will play Gauff next. The pair has met twice before, with Gauff winning both times. "She is definitely a fighter," Gauff said about the Italian.



WAR CRY: Matteo Arnaldi is all pumped up after his win over Andrey Rublev, Friday at the French Open tennis tournament PHOTO X

In the men's segment, it was Matteo Arnaldi who became the cynosure of all eyes by knocking out sixth seed Andrey Rublev 7-6 (8-6), 6-2, 6-4 in a match that lasted two hours and 35 minutes. The match was full of long rallies, but Arnaldi came up with some good winners at crucial junctures to win the match.

In another match second seed Jannik Sinner made short work of Russian Pavel Kotov 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 to advance to the fourth round. Kotov had earlier defeated veteran Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka in their second round match. However, against the power-hitting Sinner, he did not have much of a chance with the Italian hitting 28 winners in the match.

Ons Jabeur also advanced in women's singles with a 6-4, 7-6 (7-5) win over Leylah Fernandez.