

Agri focus in ₹2.65L-cr Budget

Pune rains claim 4 lives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

₹35,536 crore for Education sector which includes ₹3,791 crore for 'Samagra Sikshya' and ₹1,583 crore for skill development

₹21,200 crore for Health sector which includes ₹5,450 crore for Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana and ₹2,462 crore for Mukhya Mantri Swasthya Seva Mission

₹17,942 crore for undertaking various women and child-centric policy and welfare measures including ₹963 crore for supplementary nutrition programme

₹15,865 crore for roads, bridges, airports and railways. It includes ₹1,085 crore for Gramanchal Paribahan and ₹1,990 crore under Setu Bandhan Yojana



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi presents the Budget for 2024-25 fiscal at Assembly in Bhubaneswar, Thursday
OP PHOTO

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 25: The BJP government in the state presented its maiden Budget Thursday with a total outlay of ₹2.65 lakh crore for the 2024-25 fiscal, laying emphasis on agriculture and women empowerment.

The size of the Budget for the current financial year was around 15 per cent more than ₹2.30 lakh crore allocated for the 2023-24 fiscal, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said in the Assembly.

Majhi, who also holds the Finance portfolio, proposed an outlay of ₹33,919 crore for agriculture, which is about 36 per cent more than the allocation made in the previous fiscal. Of the total Budget estimates, programme expenditure was pegged at ₹1.55 lakh crore and administrative expenditure at ₹97,725 crore. "₹3,900 crore has been allocated towards Disaster Risk Management Funds," he said.

To ensure speedy empowerment of women, as promised by the BJP in its election manifesto, Majhi allocated ₹10,000 crore for the Subhadra scheme.

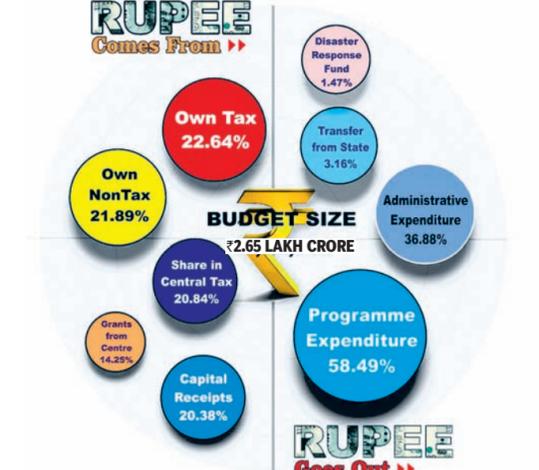
The CM proposed an allocation of ₹5,000 crore for the Samrudha Krushaka Yojana for farmers. The government, he said, made a provision of ₹1,935 crore for CM Kisan Yojana to include the farm-

ers who were excluded from PM Kisan Yojana. This will replace the KALIA scheme launched by the previous BJD government, sources said.

The Budget allocated ₹21,200 crore for the health sector. ₹5,450 crore has been allocated for Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana, modifying the Biju Swasthya Kalyana Yojana implemented by the previous BJD government.

Noting that the state's GSDP is expected to grow at 8 per cent, Majhi said the aim is to ensure a 'Viksit Odisha' in the next few years. Asserting that Lord Jagannath is the identity of the state, the CM said major allocations have been proposed for the promotion of Jagannath Culture and Odia Asmita. A corpus fund of ₹500 crore has been created for Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, he said. Similarly, a corpus fund of ₹200 crore has been created for Odia Asmita, Majhi said, adding that the Mukhya Mantri Kalakara Sahayata Yojana has been provided with an outlay of ₹72 crore and ₹15 crore proposed for the conservation and protection of monuments.

Majhi said ₹1,000 crore has been allocated for Bhubaneswar Metro Rail project. Similarly, ₹918 crore has been proposed for a new city development pro-



gramme and ₹200 crore for a land bank scheme. "₹600 crore has been allocated for the development of railway projects in the state and ₹6,180 crore for road development initiatives," the CM said.

The government also renamed Biju Setu Yojana as Setu Bandhan Yojana, 'Make in Odisha' as 'Utkarsh Utkal' and 'Ama Odisha, Nabin Odisha' as 'Vikasit Gaon, Vikasit Odisha'. Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana was also renamed, it was learnt.

MORE P6&7

- NEW INITIATIVES**
- ₹10,000 crore** for Subhadra Yojana
 - ₹5,000 crore** for Samrudha Krushaka Yojana
 - ₹500 crore** for implementation of CSS Ayusman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
 - ₹500 crore** corpus fund for SJTA for promotion and propagation of Jagannath Culture
 - ₹200 crore** for corpus fund for medical colleges and hospitals
 - ₹200 crore** corpus fund for promotion and propagation of Odia Asmita
 - ₹156 crore** for to address dropout among tribal students

As many as 12,000 people were consulted in the last few days to prepare the annual Budget. It is a people's Budget

MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI | CHIEF MINISTER

I will say again that it is a 'double engine sarkar' and it is a double disappointment (referring to the Union Budget and the Odisha Budget). I have noticed that they have renamed more than 40 schemes of my government

NAVEEN PATNAIK | BJD PRESIDENT

There is nothing in the Budget for the development of farmers and women. The BJP government has just enhanced the earlier Budget size by 10% to 20%. It just changed names of several schemes of the previous dispensation

TARA PRASAD BAHINPATI | CONGRESS LEADER

Polavaram rocks House

Bhubaneswar: The state Assembly Thursday witnessed ruckus, with Congress members demanding formation of a House Committee on Polavaram Dam project in Andhra Pradesh, which the Opposition party claimed is likely to inundate about 1,500 hectare of land in Malkangiri district. The issue was raised by Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Rama Chandra Kadam during the Zero Hour. He strongly criticised the BJP-led Central government for promoting the project.

Paris Olympics starts today

AGENCIES

Paris, July 25: Paris has long been a city of dreamers; just look at the Eiffel Tower, for decades the world's loftiest structure. Audacity also underpins the French capital's plans for its first Olympic Games in a century, which open Friday with an opening ceremony for the ages.

The most sprawling and elaborate Olympic opening ever — a gala spectacular Friday evening on the River Seine that even French President Emmanuel Macron says initially felt like 'a crazy and not very serious idea' — kicks off 16 days of competition which promise to be ground-breaking, with nearly every corner of the city hosting some aspect of competition.

Olympic organisers were struggling to find suitable host cities for their flagship Summer Games when they settled on Paris in 2017, enticed by its promise of innovations and the potential for the city of romance to rekindle love for the Olympics. But Paris' challenges are huge, too.

The city that has been repeatedly struck by deadly extremist attacks has to safeguard 10,500 athletes and millions of visitors. The international context



Abhinav Bindra runs with Olympic flame

of wars in Ukraine and Gaza add layers of complication for the gargantuan security effort. French Elite Special Forces are part of the security detail for Israel's delegation.

Up to 45,000 police and gendarmes, plus 10,000 soldiers, are safeguarding the French capital and its suburbs that together are hosting most of the 32 sports that will crown Olympic champions in 329 medal events. The gold, silver and bronze medals they'll hand out are inlaid with a hexagonal, polished chunk of iron taken from the Eiffel Tower.

Paris also hopes to reassure climate-conscious 'Generation Z' and beyond by staging Games that are less polluting, more sustainable and more socially virtuous than their predecessors.

States can tax mines, mineral land: SC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 25: In a setback to the Centre and huge revenue boost to mineral-rich states like Odisha, the Supreme Court Thursday overruled its 1989 verdict by holding that royalty payable on minerals is not a tax and that states have the legislative competence to impose taxes on mines and mineral-bearing lands.

Mineral-rich states like Jharkhand and Odisha have urged the SC to decide on recovery of taxes worth thousands of crores levied by the Centre on mines and minerals, till now. They also urged the top court to make the verdict operational with retrospective effect to ensure refund of the taxes from the Centre. However, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, vehemently opposed the submissions and sought that the verdict be made effective prospectively.

A nine-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, asked the Centre and the states to file written submissions on this aspect, and said that it will decide the issue July 31.

By a majority verdict of 8:1, the

nine-judge Constitution bench held that royalty payable on minerals is not a tax.

The CJ, who read out the verdict for himself and seven judges of the bench, held that Parliament does not have the power to tax mineral rights under Entry 50 of the List II of the Constitution.

Reading the operative part of the majority verdict, the CJ said the 1989 verdict of the apex court's seven-judge Constitution bench, which had held that royalty is tax, is incorrect.

"Royalty is not within the nature of tax as it is a contractual consideration paid by the lessee for the mining lease. Both royalty and dead rent do not fulfil the characteristics of tax. The judgement in India Cements (1989 verdict) holding royalty to be a tax is overruled," the CJ said.

Royalties are payments that the user party makes to the

owner of an intellectual property or real property asset.

Under Entry 49, states have the power to levy taxes on lands and buildings, while Entry 50 allows states to impose taxes on mineral rights subject to any limitations imposed by Parliament by law relating to mineral development.

The CJ said the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDRA), 1957 does not limit the states from imposing taxes on mines and mineral development.

"There is no specific provision in the MMDRA Act imposing limitations on the taxing powers of the State. Royalty under MMDRA is not in the nature of a tax," the bench said, adding, "States have legislative competence to tax mines, minerals and mineral-bearing land."

At the outset, the CJ said the bench has delivered two separate verdicts and Justice BV

Nagarathna has given dissenting views. Reading out her verdict, Justice Nagarathna said the states do not have the legislative competence to levy taxes on mines and minerals bearing lands.

The bench decided the hugely contentious issue of whether the royalty payable on minerals is a tax under the MMDRA, and if only the Centre is vested with the power to levy such exaction or states also have the authority to impose levies on mineral bearing land in their territory.

Besides the CJ and Justice Nagarathna, the other members of the bench are Justices Hrishikesh Roy, Abhay S Oka, JB Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Ujjal Bhuyan, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih.

The nine-judge bench of the apex court began hearing the complex matter February 27 because of two apparently conflicting constitution bench decisions on the issue.

The case has its roots in a dispute between India Cement Ltd and the Tamil Nadu government. India Cement secured a mining lease in Tamil Nadu and was paying royalty to the state government.



Here comes the auditor of your VIKAS

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	80039.80 ↓ 109.08
NIFTY	24406.10 ↓ 7.40
DOLLAR	83.74 ↑ ₹0.02
EURO	90.82 ↑ ₹0.14
GOLD	₹67,724 ↓ ₹1,228
SILVER	₹81,806 ↓ ₹3,088

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	30.4°C	28.0°C
Min Temp	25.4°C	24.5°C
Humidity	95%	97%
Rainfall	2.0mm	2.4mm

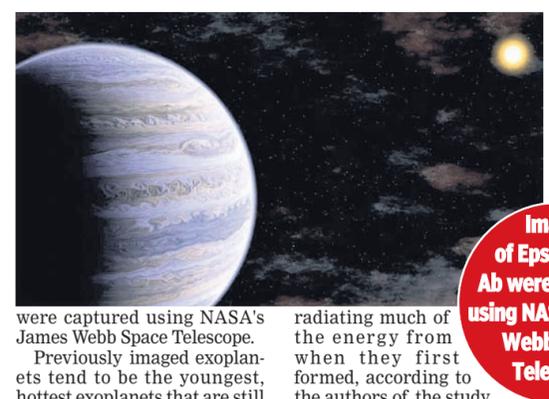
FORECAST
RAIN LIKELY

Nearby 'super-Jupiter' could be one of coldest exoplanets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: A nearby 'super-Jupiter' exoplanet — about 12 light years away from Earth — was detected and could be one of the coldest, according to an international study, including researchers from IIT Kanpur.

Estimating the temperature on the planet at two degrees Celsius, the authors said that Epsilon Indi Ab is colder than any other imaged exoplanet — planets existing outside of our solar system. The closest one is Proxima Centauri b at about four light years from Earth, according to NASA, the US space agency. Images of Epsilon Indi Ab



Images of Epsilon Indi Ab were captured using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope

were captured using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope. Previously imaged exoplanets tend to be the youngest, hottest exoplanets that are still

radiating much of the energy from when they first formed, according to the authors of the study published in the journal Nature.

As planets cool and contract over their lifetime, they become significantly fainter and, therefore, harder to image, they said. The US space agency has confirmed the existence of about 5,000 of the billion exoplanets in our galaxy.

Orbiting the star Epsilon Indi A, Epsilon Indi Ab has been dubbed a 'super-Jupiter'.

"It is a little warmer and more massive, but is more similar to Jupiter than any other planet that has been imaged so far," lead author Elisabeth

Matthews of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy, Germany, said.

The 'back-and-forth wobbles' of the star Epsilon Indi A that the researchers observed suggested hints of a possible planetary body.

However, the planet did not match their modelled predictions, they said.

"It's about twice as massive, a little farther from its star, and has a different orbit than we expected. The cause of this discrepancy remains an open question," Matthews said.

The planet's atmosphere too was found to differ from the predictions.

"The planet's atmosphere ap-

pears to have an unusual composition that indicates a high metal content and a different carbon-to-oxygen ratio than we see on our own solar system planets," study author Prashant Pathak, an assistant professor at the department of space, planetary and astronomical sciences and engineering (SPASE), IIT Kanpur, said.

Using shorter wavelengths of light to detect the planet, the researchers found that the images were 'fainter than expected'.

The researchers found that when using light of shorter wavelengths (violet has the shortest wavelength) to detect the planet, it was 'fainter than expected'.

leisure



KEANU: THE MATRIX CHANGED MY LIFE

Actor Keanu Reeves, known for his role in *John Wick*, choked up as he spoke about his film *The Matrix* clocking 25 years. During an appearance on *The Late Show*, he said, “*The Matrix* changed my life, and then over these years, it’s changed so many other people’s lives in really positive and great ways.”

LOPEZ THROWS A LAVISH BRIDGERTON THEME PARTY

Singer-actress Jennifer Lopez turned 55 and shared a video on her Instagram which showcased a montage of moments from her *Bridgerton*-inspired birthday party. The dramatic video montage was set to orchestral music, reports *People* magazine.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today even if you are alone, you may not really feel lonely. You will desire to listen to your inner self, so that you can express yourself more imaginatively. Ganesh says spend the evening with your beloved who can listen to your voice in your silence also.

TAURUS
This all matters are likely to revolve around the opposite sex. Women are going to feature prominently and significantly in everything that you do. So says Ganesh. That is good. But you will be inclined to be lazy and laid back and may thus reduce the effect and impact of efforts.

GEMINI
You need to pay more attention to yourself today. Your kind and generous nature means you often think about others rather than about yourself. Now is the time to pay attention to your own needs. You need to spend more time with your family and friends as well, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will secure your place with hard work in your job or business. Ties with partners will improve. Closeness with spouse is indicated. Melody and joy will mark domestic bliss. You will spend the evening with your beloved. Ganesh's blessings are with you.

LEO
The pressure at work will be high. Some person may try to tempt you with lucrative offers to go against your principles. However, you will be able to resist the lure of easy money. Your health may suffer today, so be on guard, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will stay calm and steady today, and there is hardly anything that can disturb your peace of mind. Your family and friends will back you fully and motivate you to overcome hurdles. You will work with devotion, says Ganesh. You may ask for work that others may find very difficult to do.

LIBRA
Ganesh says people will try to take advantage of your amiable nature and disposition. Small issues will crop up today making your nature a little tensed and enhance your anger too. You will be inspired to take chances in monetary matters. Ganesh says you need to keep your mind steady and regain your lost charm soon.

SCORPIO
Your imagination runs wild today. Though you do not travel geographically, your mind travels beyond boundaries. Think and act according to your will, advises Ganesh. However, practice caution before taking any major step.

SAGITTARIUS
You will be loaded with responsibilities at work today, fore sees Ganesh. But, you are pro challenges and will take it up sportingly. On personal front, the list of your friends is likely to get longer. All in all, Ganesh sees you in an active avatar today.

CAPRICORN
Don't let your emotions play a spoilsport while deciding about the future. Think practically, otherwise, your expectations and reality will not be on the same boat, guides Ganesh. Friendly and supportive, today you will spread happiness and win the love of one and all. Whenever you get confused about which path to take, take advice from the experienced people around you.

AQUARIUS
Set any target, take up any activity or accept any challenge; you will succeed in any of them with flying colours, foresees Ganesh. Your well-wishers will shower praises upon you for those hard earned achievements. Friends are like family to you, take them out and have a gala time before another busy day begins.

PISCES
You will be busy with romance throughout the day. While singles are likely to find the person of their dreams, those who are married will establish a new closeness in their relationship. Your attitude towards work will begin to change. You will become more serious about your career, and the fruits of this transformation will be reaped by you shortly in the near future, says Ganesh.

FSB'S CHILDREN'S FILM FEST: DAY II

Students use sand animation for storytelling

Bhubaneswar: The second day of the three day Children's Film Festival, organised by Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB) at GKM Odissi Research Centre, Thursday, began with American adventure film *The Black Stallion*, made in 1979, directed by Carol Ballard.

It was an adaptation of the eponymous children's novel by *Walter Farley*. The film narrates the tale of a young boy Alec, his friendship with an Arabian Stallion (Black) and how they together overcome hardships and compete in a horse race.



Later, the students of Loyola and KIIT International School, who are taking part in the festival, were engaged in the sand

animation workshop, guided by the FSB volunteers. They used sand as a medium to tell stories that was devised by their memories.

Students used their creativity, made story boards and used the stop motion animation technique to create short animated videos.

American silent comedy film *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), directed by Buster Keaton, was screened at the end of the second day. The movie tells the story of a projectionist who dreams of becoming a detective.

Shweta bracing up for smaller roles

Mumbai: Actress Shweta Tiwari, a big name in television industry, appeared earlier this year in Rohit Shetty's movie *Indian Police Force*. In her next role, she will portray an intelligence officer under Ajay Devgn's Sangram Bhalerao in *Singham Again*. But that's not it. The *Kasautii Zindagii Kay* actor is now also working with Karan Johar.

In an interview with a news portal, Shweta, shedding light on the project, divulged, "I'm doing

Dharma Productions' upcoming web series. In that, I play a don-like character who wears a saree and smokes cigarettes (laughs). It was a very challenging role and that's why I wanted to do it."

Though she is tight-lipped about other details, Shweta says she is prepared for smaller roles in this next chapter of her career.

"I've always told myself - 'do what you like.' I've been a lead face in television but when I'm stepping out and foraying into something else, I want to explore different parts. I know that I'll have to accept smaller roles if I want to work with a certain director or an actor. I want to make my debut in different avenues every five years," shared the actress.



Bebo's special friend

Mumbai: Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan, who was recently seen in the heist movie *Crew*, has shared that producer and fashion designer Rhea Kapoor is one of her closest friends who is brutally honest with her. Talking about Rhea, Kareena told a magazine, "Rhea is also one of my closest friends, and I'm very lucky to have her in my life. If she feels that I'm being irrational or I'm going wrong, she tells me honestly that 'No you're being unfair'. That's the kind of relationship we have built. She is younger than me but she is also sensible."

Rhea, who is the sister of actress Sonam Kapoor, has been Kareena's friend for a very long time. In fact, she is also one of the producers of *Crew*, and also produced *Veere Di Wedding*. "I like to have such people in my life. I don't like 'Yes Men'. I have those people around me who will tell me that I'm fab when I have done something amazing, and if I do something bad, they will size me down," she concluded.



Samantha, Ali team up for Rakht Brahmnd

Mumbai: Actor Ali Fazal, who is basking on the success of the third season of the streaming show *Mirzapur*, is set to join the cast of the upcoming series *Rakht Brahmnd*. He will be seen in the lead role opposite Samantha Ruth Prabhu.

The series is a period fantasy drama and is helmed by the visionary duo Raj & DK. It will be directed by Rahi Anil Barve, who is known for his work in *Tumbbad*, a horror fantasy.

A source said: "The project is a marvellous vision of Raj & DK, it's definitely a step forward in its genre of fantasy drama. The cast has finally all been locked and the shoot is set to start next week. Ali will be shooting for the series through August while also completing small schedules of his other projects. The vision of the show was enough to get Ali excited to be part of the series. It's a really interesting part, something he has never done before, both from the character perspective and also genre-wise."

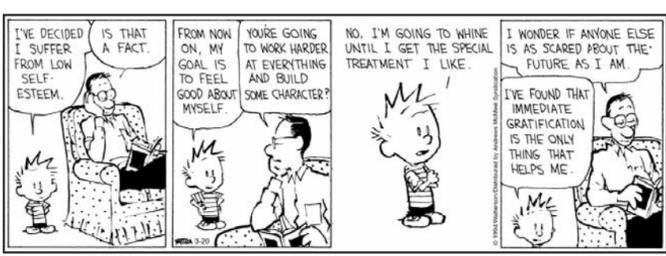
The series also stars Aditya Roy Kapur and Wamiqa Gabbi in key roles.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

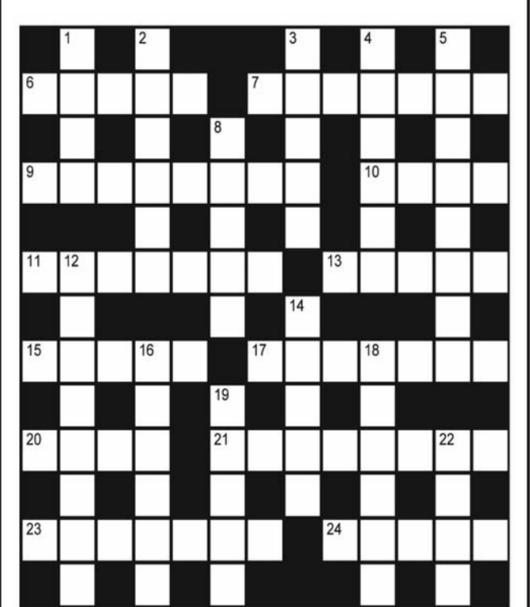


BREVITY



FUN post

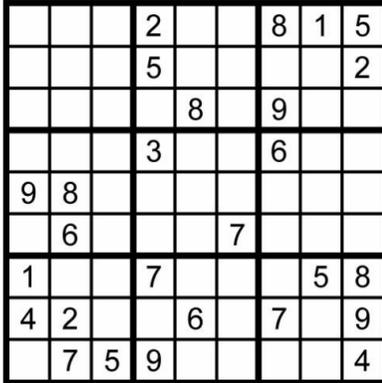
CROSSWORD



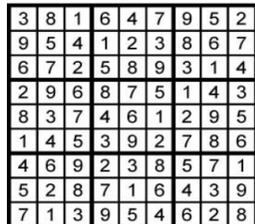
- Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 6 Water (Prefix)
 - 7 Positive
 - 9 Stocky
 - 10 Seepage
 - 11 Cordial
 - 13 Kooky
 - 15 Numbers game
 - 17 Like some gains
 - 20 Off yonder
 - 21 Hair style
 - 23 Carriage
 - 24 Much of Chile
- Down**
- 1 Harp's cousin
 - 2 Puzzle type
 - 3 Erica
 - 4 Lazy
 - 5 Trattoria's cousin
 - 8 Sacred song
 - 12 Backless sandal (4-4)
 - 14 Factory
 - 16 Spin
 - 18 Degree
 - 19 Fire starter
 - 22 Bad day for Caesar

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

SPLENDID ACT

Artistes from Space Academy enact Odia play 'Nandika Keshari' on the concluding day of a drama festival organised by Odisha Sangeet Nakak Akademi at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



NGT 'no' to sand mining in Subarnarekha river



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 25: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the state government that no sand mining in Subarnarekha river passing Balasore district can be carried out without submission of a fresh District Survey Report.

The environment watchdog's Eastern Zone bench issued the direction recently while hearing a petition filed by advocate Sankar Prasad Pani assisted by Ashutosh Padhy.

The petitioner had challenged the District Survey Report of Balasore Collector saying that the administration didn't follow the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines.

The green body said that the need for replenishment study for riverbed sand is required in order to nullify the adverse impacts arising of excessive sand extraction

The green body said that the need for replenishment study for riverbed sand is required in order to nullify the adverse impacts arising of excessive sand extraction. Mining within or near riverbed has a direct impact on the stream's physical characteristics, such as channel geometry, bed elevation, substratum composition and stability, in-stream roughness of the bed,

flow velocity, discharge capacity, sediment transport capacity, turbidity and temperature.

In the present case, in view of the May 30, 2024 letter of the Collector & District Magistrate, Balasore, since no replenishment study has been carried out in the district (Balasore), the impugned order of approval of the District Survey Report is liable for revocation and cannot be acted upon.

"In absence of replenishment study in the district, duly considered by State Expert Appraisal Committee and approved by State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha, no sand mining can be carried out in the stretch of Subarnarekha river passing through Balasore," read the NGT order.

"We accordingly allow the present appeal and quash the impugned order of approval of the District Survey Report. However, without prejudice to the order that has been passed hereinabove, we may observe that it will always be open for SEIAA, Odisha to reconsider the matter of grant of approval of District Survey Report, if the same is submitted afresh with replenishment study, in accordance with law," it added.

ORMAS signs 13 MoUs for skill devpt training

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 25: The chief executive officer (CEO) of Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS) Poonam T Guha and the national heads of 10 project implementing agencies (PIAs) signed 13 Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) here Thursday.

The MoUs were signed in presence of Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water minister Rabi Narayan Naik and principal secretary of the department Sushil Kumar Lohani.

The pact is part of the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), a scheme to provide free residential skill development training and placement to 17,272 unemployed rural youth in various trades. The total project outlay is estimated to be ₹126 crore, a statement said.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Naik said, "ORMAS has been a pioneer in the domain of skill development training. It has provided a platform to the rural youth of Odisha to break the shackles of poverty and earn their livelihoods independently."

Lohani said, "Collaboration with the PIAs will help in achieving a greater goal of equipping the rural youth with required employable skills to transform their socio-economic plight."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Hubby held for abetting woman scribe's suicide

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 25: A day after Madhumita Parida, a journalist working for a web channel, was found dead on railway tracks in Bapuji Nagar area, Dhauri police arrested her husband Sridhar Jena Thursday on charges of abetting her suicide.

Addressing mediapersons, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Prateek Singh said, "The woman journalist ended her life after she spotted some WhatsApp chats in his mobile phone, doubting extra-marital affairs of Sridhar."

The DCP also said, "An agitated Madhumita had visited Dhauri police station in late hours of July 22 and lodged a complaint against her husband alleging that the latter had been threatening her to end their conjugal life. Soon, her mother also arrived at the police station. She took Madhumita to home, promising before cops to look into the matter. The next day, the couple submitted a written statement before cops that things are normal between them now."

Singh added that things, however, worsened July 24 as Madhumita caught Sridhar again while in contact with other women. This disturbed the lady scribe who ended her



life by jumping before a moving train near Sishu Bhavan Chowk.

"The cops have seized his mobile phone to obtain more information. Besides, we are also scanning CCTV footage from Rabi Talkies to Mausi Maa Square to detect Madhumita's movement on the fateful night," he added.

The couple was residing near Lingipur area. The duo tied nuptial knots March 1, after five years of their relationship. Sridhar had to leave for Rajasthan as he was posted as an Airforce officer there. What followed the next was the relationship between them soured due Sridhar's posting outside the state.

A day before committing suicide, Madhumita posted a video of her on social media account, saying her husband has illicit affairs with other women. "He is threatening to divorce me despite many attempts by my family to convince him. Due to frequent mental torture, I am unable to attend my office regularly," she added.

March in memory of Kargil heroes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 25: Central Bureau of Communication (CBC) Bhubaneswar office, under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India organised a candlelight march in honour of the 25th Kargil Vijay Diwas here, Thursday. The event served as a poignant reminder of the sacrifice and bravery of soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the country during the Kargil War of 1999.

The commemoration aimed at instilling the spirit of patriotism and conveying the heroic tales of the martyrs to the younger generation

The march commenced from Sainik School and progressed towards Acharya Vihar Square. Under the supervision of CBC field exhibition officer Mahendra Prasad Jena, Students, accompanied by their parents, school principal and staffers, officials from the department participated in the event. The commemoration aimed at instilling the spirit of patriotism and conveying the heroic tales of the martyrs to the younger generation.

With the direction from the Central government to observe Kargil Vijay Diwas nationwide July 26, CBC Bhubaneswar has also planned additional programmes at Sainik School campus.

Check diarrhoea spread: Govt to Collectors

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 25: The state government Thursday directed all district Collectors and municipal commissioners to take necessary measures to control diarrhoea along with malaria and dengue outbreak during the monsoon season.

In a letter, Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) Commissioner-Secretary Shalini Pandit said, "In view of the rise in diarrhoea and vector-borne diseases, the state government has decided to take precautionary measures that include prevention and control of diarrhoea, malaria and dengue besides identification and management of tuberculosis and leprosy cases."

She also emphasised on identifying immunisation dropouts and pregnant women, who have not tested for Hepatitis B.



"The state government is focused in reducing child mortality caused by diarrhoea, which accounts for about 10 per cent of deaths among children aged below five. These deaths could be averted by preventive measures such as early initiation of treatment by the use of oral rehydration solution (ORS) and zinc tablets, along with adequate nutritional intake by the child during diarrhoea," she said.

Pandit said as part of intensified diarrhoea control activities, an integrated campaign

'stop diarrhoea' is being implemented across the state from July 1 to August 31. During the campaign, several advocacy and awareness activities are being carried out at community and school levels.

"Major activities include strengthening service provisions for managing the cases, establishing integrated IEC corners, distribution of prophylactic ORS packets and zinc tablets to all households by ASHA workers, screening of presumptive tuberculosis cases and suspected lep-

rosy cases. In addition, continuous testing of fever and suspected dengue cases, eradication of mosquito breeding sites, cleanliness drives, community sensitisation and mobilisation by ASHA, AWW and ANM workers are being carried out," she said.

Asking for collective support from concerned authorities, Pandit said, "We firmly believe that together we will be able to ensure a successful implementation of the integrated campaign in the state."

H&FW department also directed the key stakeholders to coordinate with the department officials for effective implementation of the programme. Besides, all concerned department officials were asked to put the campaign as one of the key agendas in their periodic/monthly meetings at both district and state level.

Even moderate amount of drinking alcohol not safe



The conventional wisdom that a daily glass of wine is beneficial for health is based on years of flawed scientific research, revealed a study Thursday.

"There is simply no completely 'safe' level of drinking," said lead researcher Tim Stockwell from the University of Victoria in Canada.

The study, published in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, debunks the previous research, which stated that moderate drinkers live longer and have lower risks of heart disease than abstainers.

The main issue is that these studies often include older adults without accounting for their lifetime drinking habits.

Consequently, moderate drinkers are compared to 'abstainer' groups, which may include individuals who quit drinking due to health issues, making the moderate drinkers appear

healthier by comparison. Stockwell and his team reviewed 107 studies that examined the relationship between drinking habits and longevity. Initially, the data suggested that light to moderate drinkers had a 14 per cent lower risk of dying during the study period compared to abstainers.

However, this changed upon closer inspection. Higher quality studies, which involved younger participants (under 55) and excluded former and occasional drinkers from the abstainer category, found no link between moderate drinking and longer life.

It was the lower-quality studies that showed a positive correlation between moderate drinking and longevity.

Stockwell highlighted the long-standing belief in the health benefits of moderate drinking, exemplified by the "French paradox" theory from the 1990s, which credited red wine for the low heart disease rates in France despite a high-fat diet.

This perception remains popular, though the reality is that moderate drinking likely does not extend life and may increase the risk of certain cancers. No major health organisation endorses a risk-free level of alcohol consumption. IAN5

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To love is not to possess, but to give oneself.

THE MOTHER



Reversing the Bans

For three years now, since the Taliban's return to power, girls in Afghanistan have been unable to attend secondary school. They are in desperate need of a basic education, yet their rights have been systematically curtailed under the Taliban's regime of "gender apartheid."

Although a recent United Nations meeting in Qatar did manage to bring the Taliban to the table, girls' rights were not on the agenda. The Taliban insist that they will not accept international advice on the issue. In a blatant violation of international law (and in contempt of our shared humanity), the Taliban have cast aside the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The only proper response to this abuse is to continue demanding that the Taliban heed the international community's concerns. Even if the regime will not listen to the UN, which has condemned its violations, it may respond to pressure from fellow Muslims, many of whom warn that refusing to develop the potential of half the population is jeopardising Afghanistan's future.

Afghan girls dream of becoming doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, entrepreneurs, and more. They want to play their part in rebuilding a strong, financially viable, and independent Afghanistan. There is no good reason for them to be denied that opportunity. Moreover, Taliban education policy is not just hurting women and girls. According to Human Rights Watch, there has been a significant decline in the quality of boys' education across eight of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

One tragic result of girls' exclusion from education has been a rise in forced marriage. A recent UN Women report documents a 25% increase in the rate of child marriage, citing the education ban as a key factor.

In other cases, the systematic violations of girls' rights are matters of life and death. Mental distress, depression, and suicide attempts are rising, and the risk of maternal mortality - young girls dying in childbirth - appears to have increased by at least 50%. With evidence from around the world showing that schooling for young women can reduce child mortality (under age five) by as much as half, we must now brace for a rise in infant deaths.

Nor is this abuse confined to children. The Taliban have also issued bans on female teachers and on women working in the civil service and in universities, and squeezed Afghan civil society. Following its "suspension" of women's right to work with national and international NGOs, it has become impossible for many such organisations to continue to operate and provide basic services in the country.

Afghanistan's future depends on reversing these bans. For each year of additional schooling a country provides its children, it can expect up to an 18% return in GDP per capita. For every \$1 spent on girls' education, Afghanistan would generate \$2.80 in future income. But if women cannot join the workforce, Afghanistan will never recover from its decades of wars and extreme poverty. Around half of the population will remain in need of humanitarian assistance.

Courageous Afghan girls, with support from Education Cannot Wait's groundbreaking #AfghanGirlsVoices campaign, are stepping up to demand an end to the Taliban's gender apartheid. Underground schools, local home schooling, and remote learning can all help. In 2023, Education Cannot Wait's investments in Afghanistan reached nearly 200,000 girls and boys through community-based education programs.

But despite the overwhelming demand from girls, our partners on the ground are struggling against clerical resistance, especially in Taliban strongholds like Helmand and Kandahar. These authorities need to be told that Afghanistan will not receive financing for education until full access for girls is restored.

In the meantime, we can do more to reach Afghan girls by expanding the online and radio courses on offer from the rest of the world. That means recruiting more universities and schools to offer online courses and make their curriculums available.

There are also other ways to pressure the Taliban leadership. We know that not all Taliban agree with the current discrimination against their daughters, sisters, and wives. Other countries can increase the pressure on the regime through their own domestic legal frameworks, such as by sanctioning the Taliban leaders who are most resistant to girls' rights.

Predominantly Muslim countries have an especially important role to play. Qatar's foreign ministry - which has long served as a mediator between the Taliban and the West - has pushed for an end to the bans; the Saudis have criticized the Taliban for failing to give "Afghan women their full legitimate rights, foremost of which is the right to education, which contributes to supporting security, stability, development, and prosperity in Afghanistan"; and the United Arab Emirates has decried the policy as a violation of "the teachings of Islam, and must be swiftly reversed."

Islamic teaching does indeed support education of girls - "Iqra," meaning to read, is the first word of the Quran - and the rest of the Muslim world promotes it. "The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim," states Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 74, one of the six canonical teachings in Sunni Islam, which emphasises the faith's deep commitment to learning - by men and women.

Afghan girls must not be excluded from this commitment. They, and advocates of girls' rights everywhere, need to know that this is a battle that can still be won.

The writer, a former prime minister of the United Kingdom, is United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education and Chair of Education Cannot Wait.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

CARL JUNG

People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar.

THICH NHAT HANH

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1948: US President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which abolished racial segregation in the U.S. military.

1953: Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada military fortress in Santiago de Cuba, and, although unsuccessful, the event later inspired the 26th of July Movement, which culminated in the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista's regime in Cuba.

1956: Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser seized control of the Suez Canal and nationalized it, sparking a crisis that later resulted in French, British, and Israeli forces briefly occupying parts of Egypt.

BEYOND THE 'FEEL GOOD'

FOCUS PSU BANKS

With an eye on creating jobs and MSMEs as a key provider of these jobs, the budget speech of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman noted that PSU banks "will build their capacity to assess MSMEs for credit, instead of relying on external assessment." It is clear that banks will be under pressure to increase lending to MSMEs; they have been asked to build new credit assessment models, as the FM noted in her speech. Further, the government wants banks to lend Mudra loans with enhanced limits, though the scheme itself has raised many questions and its outcomes are seen as questionable.



Devidas Tuljapurkar

IN THE DAYS TO COME, PUBLIC SECTOR BANKING IN INDIA WILL LIKELY BE MARGINALISED FURTHER

That takes us to the long story of how the government needs and uses the banking system, in particular PSU banks, and what it has done with these banks.

Right now, PSU banking in India is passing through stage of "feel good." In 2024, PSU banks booked a net profit of Rs 1.47 lakh crore as against Rs 0.82 lakh crore losses in 2019. Gross NPA in percentage terms has gone down from 12.03% in 2019 to 3.49% as of 2024, while net NPA is down from 4.95% to 0.75%. Growth in business was 5.46% in 2020 over the previous year, while in 2024 it is 12.06% as against 2023. The only worry is market share, which was 71.1% in 2019 and has gone down to 64.40% in 2024. This means that the market share of private sector banks has gone up from 28.90% to 35.60% and within that, the market share of new generation private sector banks has gone up from 23.78% in 2019 to 31.02% in 2024. During the period, the market share of PSU banks has gone down by 6.70%, which is more than the market share of Bank of Baroda, which stood at 6.49%. Thus, it is clear that without privatising any of the PSU banks, the banking business equivalent to the size of Bank of Baroda stands privatised. The direction is clear: in the days to come, public sector banking in India will likely be marginalised further. This



The government compares PSU banks with private sector banks but it expects PSU banks to be in the forefront in implementation of all of its many schemes and policies and makes them reach the remotest areas

is a cause for worry.

What we see is the manifestation of the policy prescriptions by the regulator i.e. RBI, and the owner, i.e. the Government of India, together. During the period, a major disruption took place on account of mergers in PSU banks. In 2019, Dena and Vijaya Bank were merged into Bank of Baroda while in 2020 a megamerger took place whereby six banks were extinguished. As a consequential effect of this merger, the number of branches of PSU banks fell from 89,870, as of 2019 to 87,009 in 2024, down 2,861 branches as against which, in the case of private sector banks this number has gone up from 27,380 in 2019 to 38,216, i.e. an addition of 10,838 branches. This is one reason why PSU banks have lost market share as against private sector banks.

In 2020, the State Bank of India was asked to bail out the new generation private sector bank, Yes Bank, by infusing Rs 11,760 crore i.e. 49% stake into the troubled bank. In 2017-18, it had booked losses of Rs 6,547 crore and a marginal profit of Rs 862.23 crore in 2018-19. In 2020, despite having infused Rs 11,760 crores into Yes Bank, SBI was able to book an impressive profit of Rs 14,487 crore. The government which was championing the cause of privatisation and speaking the language of market economics, itself compelled SBI to

bail out the ailing Yes Bank, but did not allow SBI to infuse a little more to acquire 51% stake, since it would have changed the character of Yes Bank from a private sector to a public sector bank. This, in the government's view, would have proved to be counterproductive and self-defeating on the ground that, the government is committed to pursue so-called reforms further.

It is further interesting to note that during the period, the only bank from amongst PSU banks, the Bank of Maharashtra, saw its market share up from 1.15% in 2019, to 1.32% in 2024. This bank was the first amongst all PSU banks to turn around from loss-making to profit-making and is ranked number one in almost all parameters of performance. Thus, this bank has proved that it is not size which matters. This is proof of the self-defeating policy prescription of mergers in PSU banks to create large banks as if size can solve problems.

The government compares PSU banks with private sector banks but it expects PSU banks to be in the forefront in implementation of all of its many schemes and policies and makes them reach the remotest areas. This forces PSU banks to operate as loss-making in economic terms but the benefit is that PSU banks are profit-making in social terms. Accounting profits versus social profits is an

age-old dichotomy.

The business model of PSU banks has undergone a major change consequent upon Asset Quality Inspection at the instance of the then RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan. In order to turn around from a loss-making to a profit-making entity, there was very little scope to tinker with the rate of interest on deposits or advances. The only option left with those banks was to reduce administrative costs. With this, PSU banks resorted to rampant outsourcing and contractual employment. All this has helped to reduce the staff costs but has exposed the system, resulting in huge risks in operational fraud.

In addition to this now, banks are tempted to resort to co-lending or indirect lending instead of lending directly. In the name of innovation in products and services, RBI has come out with various instruments such as Assignment of Debt, sell-purchase of portfolios etc. to enable banks to evade direct lending to save overhead costs. All this helps reduce costs, but ultimately it is the customer who pays. There has also been a rampant increase in service charges, plus charges on services that traditionally were free. Thus, now low net worth customers who were brought in the ambit of banking with the implementation of Jan Dhan are required to pay the costs for the services and resultantly now, they are quitting. It is time the government clarifies its stand on the role and responsibility of banking in India, which is still a developing economy struggling hard with poverty, unemployment and economic disparity. Banks should book profits but profits cannot be the sole motive of banking. We also need to learn to measure social profits.

The writer is Joint Secretary of the All India Bank Employees Association and a former Director of the Bank of Maharashtra.

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SPECTRUM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Reevaluating the startup ecosystem



Ashyashree Praharaj

BY LEARNING FROM THE PITFALLS OF FAILED VENTURES, THE STARTUP COMMUNITY CAN FOSTER A CULTURE OF INNOVATION GROUNDED IN REALITY AND POISED FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

In recent years, the entrepreneurial landscape has been marked by a paradox. On the one hand, we are witnessing an unprecedented surge in the number of startups buoyed by technological advancements and an ever-growing culture of innovation. On the other hand, an alarming number of these startups fail, often within their first few weeks. This trend prompts a critical examination of the underlying causes and necessitates a reevaluation of the startup ecosystem.

Startups embody the dream of innovation and the promise of disrupting traditional industries. They attract talent and investment with visions of exponential growth and groundbreaking solutions. However, the path to success is fraught with challenges. According to several studies, the failure rate of startups hovers around 90%, with a significant percentage failing within the first year. These stark statistics raise essential questions about the viability and sustainability of the current startup model.

One of the most common reasons for startup failure is the ab-

sence of a real market need for the product or service. Entrepreneurs often fall in love with their ideas without validating them through thorough market research. This disconnection between innovation and market demand leads to unsustainable business models. While some startups attract significant initial investment, many struggle to secure funding for growth and development. Cash flow problems, mismanagement of funds, and unrealistic financial projections often result in startups running out of money before establishing a stable revenue stream.

Effective leadership and management are crucial for navigating the complexities of a startup. Inexperienced founders may lack the skills to handle rapid growth, manage teams, and make strategic decisions. This can lead to internal conflicts, poor execution, and ultimately, failure. Similarly, scaling too quickly can be as detrimental as not growing. Startups that expand without a solid foundation risk overextending their resources, diluting their brand, and losing focus on their core competencies. The

startup ecosystem is highly competitive, with numerous players vying for market share. Without a unique value proposition and a clear competitive advantage, startups struggle to differentiate themselves and gain traction. Additionally, technological challenges, such as selecting the incorrect platform, not keeping up with technological advancements, or encountering significant software bugs, can impede a startup's capability to deliver its product or service effectively. This can result in customer dissatisfaction and eventual failure.

While the high failure rate is daunting, it also offers valuable lessons for aspiring entrepreneurs and the broader startup community. Embracing failure as a learning experience rather than a stigma can lead to more resilient and adaptable business practices. Entrepreneurs must invest time and resources in validating their ideas through market research, customer feedback, and pilot programmes. Understanding the target audience and their needs is paramount. Financial planning, including realistic budgeting, cash flow management, and securing

diverse funding sources, is essential for sustainability. Startups must also be prepared for lean periods and unexpected expenses. Startups should prioritise sustainable growth over rapid expansion. Focusing on core strengths and incremental scaling may help mitigate risks and build a solid foundation for long-term success. Further, startups must continuously innovate and adapt to stay ahead of the competition.

The increasing cases of startup failures serve as a sobering reminder of the harsh realities of the entrepreneurial journey. However, they also highlight the importance of preparation, resilience, and adaptability. By learning from the pitfalls of failed ventures, the startup community can foster a culture of innovation grounded in reality and poised for sustainable success. The dream of entrepreneurship remains alive, but it requires a pragmatic approach and a willingness to learn from failure to thrive.

The writer is a research scholar, Department of Business Administration, Berhampur University.

Lack of focus

Sir, The omission of the term 'railway' in the Union Budget 2024 comes as a huge disappointment in terms of lack of focus on critical areas in the public domain. Hopes were also dashed regarding updates on the three economic corridors announced in the interim budget. There was also no talk about completion of big projects like J&K dedicated freight corridors. Moreover, it was also expected that the government would continue its capex in the rail sector by allocating resources through general budgetary support. Despite an increase in traffic, profitability is going down. Since the fund allocation for maintenance is stagnant in spite of increasing infrastructure and rolling stocks, this can prove to be disastrous in the long run. More initiatives for enhanced safety measures and issues such as delays, cancellations and frequent disruptions that cause passenger inconvenience needs to be redressed promptly.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

Challenges persist

Sir, The Union Budget 2024-25 emphasizes employment and skilling, reflecting a governmental focus on creating job opportunities and enhancing skills among youth. However, there are significant challenges and bottlenecks which include inadequate infrastructure, limited access to quality training programmes and the need for better alignment with industry demands that could hinder effective employability and skill development. Despite India's trade deficit with China surpassing \$100 billion, the budget lacks impactful measures to boost domestic manufacturing. Strengthening the MSMEs sector is crucial to reduce dependency on Chinese imports, yet effective policies and financial support are needed to integrate MSMEs into mainstream production. The defence budget has seen an increase, focusing on modernisation. However, concerns persist about whether this increment will adequately address advancements in aircraft, equipment and military services. It is essential to monitor how these allocations translate into tangible improvements in defence capabilities. The budget's initiative to establish a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for modernising agriculture, promoting chemical-free farming and enhancing climate-resilient crop production is commendable.

Bishal Kumar Saha, MURSHIDABAD

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

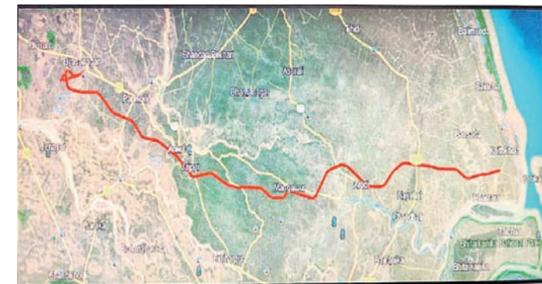
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JAJPUR ROAD-DHAMRA RAIL LINE

Residents upset as Centre ignores project in Budget



Location map of the Jajpur Road-Dhamra rail project

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, July 25: Residents of Jajpur district were left disappointed after the proposed rail route from Jajpur Road to Dhamra port via Jajpur town and Aradi in Bhadrak district failed to find mention in the Union Budget recently tabled by the Centre in the Parliament.

A plan outlay of ₹2,996.81 lakh has been prepared for construction of the 96-km long rail route. The East Coast Railway (ECOR) has prepared and submitted a detailed project report (DPR) before the Railways Board for approval.

Construction of the new rail route will require 1,693.46 acre land which includes 1,316.451 acre private land, 294.379 acre government land and 12.775 acre of forest land.

Land acquisition was also planned for construction of the new rail route. However, the project not finding any mention in the Budget has sparked resentment among the residents.

According to information received under Right to Information (RTI) Act, a consultancy agency SM Consultants was given the work order for preparing DPR and final location survey October 27, 2023.

The work order included surveys like geo-technical investigation, signaling works, electrical and operating works and

civil engineering. Ministry of Railways had sanctioned ₹2.40 crore funds for the purpose.

The agency was asked to submit reports on location survey, DPR and others within four months of receiving the work order. However, submission of the DPR exceeded the prescribed period and took nine months.

The negligence sparked resentment among the denizens as they demanded to take immediate steps for realisation of the rail route project under the banner of Sangram Samiti.

The project will bring immense benefit for rail users when completed as passenger trains will run at 160 km per hour and goods train at 65km speed per hour. As many as 30 big bridges and 88 small bridges will be constructed under this project.

Similarly, the project will have 12 railway stations in both the districts out of which Jajpur will have nine including the present Jajpur Road railway station and Bhadrak will have three.

The present Jajpur Road railway station will serve as a railway junction while Chhotrapur, Rampur, Segadi, Bahabalapur, Jajpur, Jaleswar, Sripara, Mangalpur, Aradi, Chandbali, Bhitarkanika and Dhamra will be the other stations.

Funds worth ₹299.68 crore will be spent in the first year of

construction, ₹449.52 crore in the second year, ₹1,048.89 crore in the third year, and ₹1,198.73 crore in the fourth year. The DPR mentions that the estimated cost might escalate and reach ₹3,315.76 crore.

The rail route project will benefit industrial firms like Jindal Stainless Steel, Tata Steel, Nilachal Ispat in Kalinganagar, Dhamra port, inner coal corridor-I and II, Vedanta Aluminum, Vedanta Power, Bhushan Power and Steel, Aryan Ispat, Hindalco LPG, Shyam Metalics, Vedanta Alumina, ACC Ltd, Hindalco in Sambalpur, Bali Parbat iron ore mines, Nalco, JSW and help transport iron ore by the mining firms from SER to ECoR.

The project, after its completion by 2029, will help 16,84,840 passengers travel by train. The DPR also mentions that Dhamra port will face traffic problem if the rail route is not constructed. In case of delay in construction, the estimated cost for the project will escalate and the pressure on Paradip port will increase.

However, the DPR hoped that the completion of the project within the deadline depends on the efficiency of the departmental officers.

According to the RTI reply, 17 proposed rail route projects are under survey. However, it is still not known when the survey will get completed, the final report will get approval and works will start. The modalities for starting rail route projects include land acquisition, forest land conversion and sanction of compensation.

The slow pace of work on Khurda Road-Bolangir rail route project is a case in this point. The project work is continuing for the last 29 years but it is yet to be completed. Similarly, reports said construction of seven rail route projects is underway after receiving approval.



FOLK DANCE: Students perform traditional 'Ghudka' dance at Balbaspur High School in Sambalpur as part of a cultural programme organised by the district education department for celebration of Shiksha Saptah (education week), Thursday

Hirakud dam to release first floodwater July 28

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, July 25: Hirakud dam will discharge this season's first floodwater from the reservoir July 28, official sources said.

The decision was taken after steady rise in water level of the reservoir following heavy rainfall upstream of the dam. This was stated here by chief engineer (in-charge) of Mahanadi basin and basin manager Sushil Kumar Behera in a press release issued Thursday.

He said floodwater will be released from the dam July 28 as per tradition. As a result, water level in Mahanadi and its tributaries will increase for which Collectors and District



Magistrates have been told to remain on high alert. Residents living downstream have been warned to take necessary precautions to protect themselves and their properties.

People of downstream districts have been warned not to venture into the river for bathing or any other purpose during the period.

During discharge of floodwater, arrangements have been made to play the sirens on the left spillway of the dam continuously for two minutes to alert people.

Water level of the Hirakud reservoir is increasing steadily due to heavy rainfall in the upper catchment area of Mahanadi and stood at 605.97 feet by 4pm, Thursday. Over 2,14,742 cusec of floodwater was found entering into the reservoir; Thursday.

Similarly, 820 cusec of floodwater was being released through the power channel, industries and canals. However, the decision on the number of gates to be opened for release of floodwater will be taken later on, stated the press release.

Man awarded life term for patricide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, July 25: Keonjhar District Sessions Judge Ashok Kumar Panda Thursday sentenced a man to life imprisonment and slapped a fine of ₹5,000 after convicting him of murder of his father in 2019.

The convict was identified as Naba Kishore Munda, son of slain Bishu Munda of Gajaamba village under Pandapada police limits in Keonjhar district. The judge pronounced the order after examining the police chargesheet and the statements recorded by 13 witnesses.



According to the case diary, Bishu's married daughter came to her parental house after a long gap, March 21, 2019. Overjoyed, Bishu asked to prepare chicken curry for her daughter and killed two birds kept in the house.

All the family members had dinner at night. However, Bishu became angry when he was not served chicken curry. When he enquired, his wife told him to wait as it was still being cooked. This led to an argument between Bishu and his son Nabakishore which soon escalated.

Later, in a fit of rage, Nabakishore attacked his father Bishu with an axe and bludgeoned his head repeatedly which resulted in his death on the spot. Police arrested the accused son and produced him in court over a complaint lodged by the deceased's wife Gurubari Munda.

Pick-up van runs over 3 at tea stall

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, July 25: Three people died and another was rendered critical Thursday after a speeding pick-up van rammed into a roadside tea stall near the Metakani temple on the Sonepur-Sambalpur road in Subarnapur district.

The deceased identified as Raja Kumbhar of Ainlachhat village, Debananda Surujal, and Sushant Sahu of Matikhai village were having tea at the shop when the mishap took place. Karan Kumbhar of Ainlachhat village, who suffered severe injuries, was initially treated at Ulunda Health Centre and later shifted to VIMSAR at Burla for further treatment.

Locals alleged that the pick-up van, travelling from Sonepur, hit them at high speed and fled the scene. The victims were rushed to the hospital, where doctors pronounced three of them dead.

Minor siblings drown in pond

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, July 25: Two minor siblings drowned, while another minor girl missed death by a whisker Thursday, while playing near a village pond in Ganjam district, police said.

The incident happened in Marei Naugaon under the jurisdiction of Khallikote police station, a police officer said. The deceased children were identified as Sudip (6) and his three-year-old sister Roshani. They were children of Rajendra Sabar, a labourer in the same village.

The villagers said the children were playing near the village pond and might have accidentally slipped into the water body. They, however, managed to rescue a two-year-old girl, a neighbour of the deceased.

She was taken to the Khallikote CHC and her condition was stated to be stable. A case of unnatural death has been registered in this connection and an investigation is underway. Khallikote PS IIC Naresh Sahu, said.

2 dead, another critical in separate elephant attacks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar/Rourkela, July 25: A man was killed in tusker attack while another sustained critical injury at Hunda village in Jangira forest section under Sadar forest range in Keonjhar district, Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Maheswar Juang, 45, and the critically injured person as Shatrughna Parida, 46, of Balidanda Sahi in Hunda village. The injured was first admitted to the Keonjhar headquarters hospital and later shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack after his health condition deteriorated.

Sources said a tusker, separated from a ten member herd, entered Hunda village and attacked Maheswar when he had gone outside to relieve himself. The tusker picked up Maheswar on its trunk and dashed him on to the ground resulting in his death on spot.

Later, the elephant went nearby Jhumukapasi village and was eating jackfruits from the trees when Maheswar accompanied the villagers and shouted to drive the animal away. Suddenly the tusker chased Shatrughna and attacked him. He sustained deep injury in his lower abdomen after the animal gored him with its tusk.

Later, Forest officials reached the village at night and rushed the two to the Keonjhar headquarters hospital. There, the doctor declared Maheswar dead and administered treatment to Shatrughna.

Sadar forest ranger Ajit Das said that the deceased Maheswar's family was handed over ₹60,000 immediately. The Forest official assured them payment of ₹5.40 lakh compensation after completion of necessary formalities.

In a separate incident, a person was killed in elephant attack at Gobardara village under Tamda Range of Bonai forest division when he was out to re-



lieve himself Thursday morning. Sources said it is the same tusker, which has been haunting the entire Bonai subdivision after it was separated from its herd.

The deceased was identified as one Khudrae Mundari, 45, of Gobardara village. Mundari had been to answer the nature's call when it was dark. Before he

could realise anything, the elephant attacked from behind and trampled him to death.

This was witnessed by another person of the village from a distance. Forest officials were immediately informed. Gurundia police and forest ranger recovered the body and dispatched it for post mortem.

The family of the deceased would be given the initial funds for cremation and the rest amount will be handed over after the completion of formalities, informed the ranger.

For the last couple of days, this particular elephant has been tormenting the entire Bonai forest division.

Come August, take selfie on wooden bridge, enjoy cruise in Bhitarkanika

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar/Kendrapara, July 25: August will bring joy to tourists as two new projects in the biodiversity-rich Bhitarkanika National Park are set to be opened for all and add to their excitement.

Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Manas Das said the two projects -- the Antara river cruise service and the wooden bridge built about 15 feet above the ground -- will allow visitors to enjoy the stunning beauty of Bhitarkanika wetland from the water body and serve as a selfie point, respectively.

According to sources, the Forest department has constructed the wooden bridge at Dangamal, with an estimated cost of around ₹4 lakh. The 600-metre long and 15-metre high bridge will enable visitors to observe the wildlife and take selfies with an attractive background. This wooden bridge stretches from the mangrove nursery to the habitat of spotted deer. Up to 20 people can access the bridge for free at a time. Two selfie points have been set up on the structure.

Furthermore, starting from August, the Antara river cruise



service will operate every Thursday and Saturday from Gupti to Dangamal.

The Aquatic Heritage Group has completed final preparations for the project. Two catamarans named MV Mahanadi and MV Bhitarkanika are ready equipped with state of the art amenities for a comfortable stay and cruising in the wilderness. Tourists can travel on these catamarans and enjoy the natural charm of 'mini-Amazon of India'. Skilled guides will accompany the tourists, providing information about Bhitarkanika. Hybrid solar and fuel systems on these vessels en-

sure hassle-free cruise experience in the river, ACF Das said.

Guide Pradeep Das said Bhitarkanika is India's second largest mangrove forest after the Sunderbans, which houses 62-73 species of mangroves and more than 1,800 saltwater crocodiles. From the wooden bridge, one can observe mangrove forests, birds, crocodiles, spotted deer and other wildlife including aquatic creatures. The natural environment will offer tourists a unique experience, the guide added.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Gopinath Sudarshan Yadav said



Bhitarkanika is a beautiful destination spread over 572 square kilometre in the delta of Brahmani, Baitarani, and Mahanadi rivers. It is renowned for its biodiversity, wildlife, and aquatic creatures.

With the Forest department continuously striving to enhance the national park's glory, everyone is hopeful that the Antara river cruise service and the wooden bridge selfie point will further attract tourists benefiting the locals and the state government's exchequer.

F.No.A-45011/9/2017-Admin.(LD)
Government of India
Ministry of Law and Justice
Legislative Department

Legislative Department proposes to engage 05 Section Officer level Consultants on contract basis for a period of one year, the details are available on the website of DoP&T and on the website of the Department i.e. <http://legislative.gov.in/> under the heading "Recruitment". Interested and eligible candidates may submit their application in prescribed proforma available on the websites within 15 days of publication of this advertisement in Newspaper.

(Bhoopendra Singh Bisht)
Under Secretary to Govt. of India
Legislative Department
Room No. 412-B, "A" Wing, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001
CBC 24301/11/0002/2425 Tel:23385023

GOVT. OF ODISHA No. A-177
OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF
WATER RESOURCES, ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR
'e' Procurement Notice No. CEMKS 01 of 2024-25

- Name of the work : Improvement to Mahanadi Right Embankment from Talapathapur to Kaimundi
- Amount put to tender : Rs. 12,22,58,855.00/-
- Bid Document Cost : Rs. 10,000.00 (Online)
- E.M.D. : Rs. 12,22,600.00/-
- Class of Contractor : "A" Class & "Special" Class
- Period of Completion : 18 Calendar months
- Other details are as follows :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Date of Opening of Technical Bid (Cover-I)
		From	To	
Chief Engineer & BM, Mahanadi Kathajodi System, Bhubaneswar	CEMKS KHD 01 of 2024-25	29.07.2024 17.00 hrs.	13.08.2024 17.00 hrs.	14.08.2024 11.00 hrs.

8. e-mail id : celmbbsr@yahoo.co.in
Further detail conditions can be seen from the Govt. website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in. The Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender, if any, will be uploaded and can be seen from the above website only.
Sd./- Chief Engineer & Basin Manager
Mahanadi Kathajodi System, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-32252/11/0001/2425

Host of new initiatives

Double whammy for Odisha: Naveen

Bhubaneswar, July 25: Opposition BJD president Naveen Patnaik Thursday criticised the BJP government at the Centre and Odisha, contending that his state



He faced a "double disappointment" in both the Union Budget and the state Budget. Speaking to reporters outside the Assembly here, the former chief minister claimed that the Mohan Charan Majhi government has reneged over 40 schemes introduced during the BJD regime.

Earlier in the day, the Odisha government presented a ₹2.65 lakh crore budget for the 2024-25 fiscal in the state Assembly. "I will say again that it is a 'double engine sarkar' and it is a double disappointment (referring to the Union Budget and the Odisha Budget). I have noticed that they have reneged more than 40 schemes of my government," Patnaik said.

The BJD chief said he would study the state budget provisions before making any further observations on it.

NOTHING IN NEW BUDGET: CONG

Coming down heavily on the state government over the Budget 2024-25, Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati said there is nothing new in this Budget. There is little for the women and farmers. They have renamed 42 schemes without launching any new schemes. He has betrayed and disappointed the people completely, he added.

The promise of MSP was implemented in the Budget which is a welcome step. However, the farmers will continue to suffer until the mandis and markets were not strengthened. Odisha has more than 60 per cent sharecroppers but the Budget does not have enough for them

SACHIN MOHAPATRA | KASHITRYA KISAN MAJDOOR | MAHANSAGAR

The new BJP government in the state tabled a ₹2.65-lakh crore Budget for financial year 2024-25 Thursday, with significant emphasis on agriculture, irrigation and women empowerment. Giving utmost importance to agriculture sector, the Budget presented by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who also holds the Finance portfolio, allocated ₹33,919 crore for the farm sector. Of the total Budget estimates, programme expenditure was pegged at ₹1.55 lakh crore, administrative expenditure proposed at ₹97,725 crore, and an outlay of ₹3,900 crore for Disaster Risk Management Funds. Fulfilling the poll promise, the BJP government earmarked an outlay of ₹10,000 crore for 'Subhadra' scheme, even as the Chief Minister termed it as a 'people's budget', prioritising inclusive development

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 25: Aired from the ambitious Subhadra Yojana that is aimed at empowering the women in the state financially, the Mohan Majhi government launched a bouquet of new initiatives in its Budget which was tabled in the Assembly Thursday.

For the promotion and propagation of Jagannath culture in the state, the government has allocated a corpus fund of ₹500 crore for Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), while ₹50 crore will be spent in the peripheral development of Maa Tarini Temple at Ghatgaon. In its endeavour to rejuvenate the agrarian income, the government has decided to purchase paddy at ₹3,100 per quintal MSP through an allocation of ₹5,000 crore towards Samrudha Krushaka Yojana.

For promotion and propagation of Odia Asmita, a corpus fund of ₹200 crore has been created. Meanwhile, the government has laid emphasis on the education sector, especially schools, by allocating ₹156 crore for the Madho Singh Haath Kharch Yojana for addressing dropouts among tribal students, while ₹50 crore has been earmarked for the Godabarisha Mishra Adarsha Prathamika Vidyalaya for enhancing quality of education at primary school level.

Empowering the state work force, ₹50 crore will be provided under Din Dayal Karmachari Niwas in industrial townships (SCDP) for constructions of workers' hostel at industrial townships.

In its attempt to boost renewable energy, ₹100 crore has been allocated under state support Roof Top Solar Projects (PM Surya Ghar). Likewise, ₹10 crore has been provided towards solar-based

streetlight at gram panchayat level.

For healthcare, the government has allocated ₹18 crore for construction of Dharmashala-cum-guesthouse for attendance of cancer patients, while ₹200 crore has been allocated for corpus fund for medical colleges and hospitals.

An additional ₹25 crore has been allocated for



establishment of paediatric cancer care facilities. For development and beautification of riverfronts in the state, the government has allocated ₹50 crore for Mahanadi Riverfront Development Project to develop the areas along the Mahanadi River in Sambalpur and Cuttack into a World Class River Front Project.

For Heritage School development scheme for upkeep of 45 schools more than 100 years old the government has allocated ₹1 crore. For promotion of organic farming, the government has earmarked ₹1.5 crore towards Odisha Balabhadra Javik Chasa Mission. ₹50 crore has been allocated for implementation of CSS Aayusman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) while ₹92 crore has been earmarked for implementation of CSS Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PM-MVY). Similarly, ₹25 crore has been proposed for implementation of CSS implement, the Pradhan Mantri School for Rising India (PM SHRI).

FOR PROMOTION AND PROPAGATION OF JAGANNATH CULTURE IN THE STATE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOCATED A CORPUS FUND OF ₹500 CRORE FOR SHREE JAGANNATH TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION (SJTA), WHILE ₹50 CRORE WILL BE SPENT IN THE PERIPHERAL DEVELOPMENT OF MAATARINI TEMPLE AT GHATGAON

IN ITS ENDEAVOUR TO REJUVENATE THE AGRARIAN INCOME, THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO PURCHASE PADDY AT ₹3,100 PER QUANTAL MSP THROUGH AN ALLOCATION OF ₹5,000 CRORE TOWARDS SAMRUDHA KRUSHAKA YOJANA



Deputy CM Parida thanks Majhi

BHUBANESWAR: Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida thanked Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi for giving priority to women and child development in the Budget wherein the expenditure for the sector has been tripled. Parida said that the Budget lays special emphasis on Odisha's Asmita, farmers, women empowerment, health services, and education. In the Budget, the Chief Minister has presented many new schemes giving priority to women and child development. For women's empowerment, economic independence and entrepreneurship development, he has announced an expenditure of ₹10,000 crore for



the 'Subhadra Yojana'. In the current Budget, a target has been set to create 25 lakh 'Lakshpati Didis' in Odisha by 2027. The Deputy Chief Minister welcomed the importance of people-oriented schemes such as the PM Matru Vandana Yojana, Mukhyamantri Sampurna Pushti Yojana, Yashoda Yojana, Mission Shakti Program, Poshan Abhiyan and Anganwadi Seva, and said sufficient expenditure has been earmarked for their implementation and successful implementation. She also termed the allocation of ₹800 crore in the Budget for tourism development and promotion with the aim of overall development of the tourism sector.

SAMAL LAUDS STATE BUDGET

Bhubaneswar: State BJP president Manmohan Samal said the Budget will satisfy people from all walks of life. He said the overall development of Odisha has been given priority in the double engine government. In this budget, the government has emphasised on the overall development of the state. The amount of the current budget is ₹2.65 lakh crore which is 15% more than the amount in FY 2023-24. Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ideals of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas,

Sabka Viswas, Sabka Prayas, the BJP government has given importance to four categories of poor, women, farmers and youth.

The BJP government is committed to the development of Odisha, which is clear in today's budget, Samal said. The first Budget of the new government set the stage for the development of Odisha. Expenditures have been made in the first Budget to fulfil the election promises. ₹500 crore has been earmarked for the development of Srimandir, ₹10,000 crore for the much awaited Subhadra scheme, while ₹3,100 per quintal MSP of paddy has been guaranteed. The old-age-disability allowance has been hiked to ₹3,500.

Similarly, ₹200 crore has been allocated for development of Odia Asmita; ₹2,426 crore for Chief Minister's Health Services Mission; ₹5,000 crore for Samrudha Krushak Yojana,

₹1,000 crore for Metro Rail; ₹10,000 crore for Developed Village-Developed Odisha, ₹6,000 crore for Prime Minister's Housing Scheme (Rural), ₹6,000 crore for Jaljivan Mission.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Bhubaneswar Metro Rail: ₹1,000 crore
New City development: ₹918 crore
Land Bank scheme: ₹200 crore
Development of railway projects: ₹600 crore
Road development project: ₹6,180 crore
Sports infrastructure: ₹952 crore
Subhadra Yojana: ₹10,000 crore
Samrudha Krushak Yojana: ₹5,000 crore
CM Kishan: ₹1,935 crore
Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY: ₹500 crore
Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana: ₹5,450 crore
FDI Park in state capital region: ₹20 crore
Film City: ₹20 crore
Din Dayal Karmachari Niwas: ₹50 crore

STATE SCHEMES TO CONTINUE: MAJHI



both introduced during the previous BJD government's tenure. Regarding new schemes proposed by the BJP government, the Chief Minister advised lawmakers to await details in the upcoming budget, scheduled to be presented in the Assembly later in the day. In a separate response to an unstarred question from BJD member Ganeswar Behera, Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena clarified that there have been no in-principle decisions to terminate the ongoing 'Location Accessible Multi-modal Initiative' (LACMI) scheme. This initiative provides affordable bus services in various blocks across Odisha. Jena also noted that buses under this scheme have not been converted into the 'Mukhya Mantri Bus Service'. He confirmed that no government funds were spent on changing the colour of buses from green to saffron. Currently, Odisha boasts of a fleet of 8,902 public transport buses, including 422 operated by the state-run Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC), serving various regions across the state.

AGRICULTURE & ALLIED SECTOR ACTIVITIES

- ₹5,000 crore for Samrudha Krushaka Yojana
₹1,935 crore for CM-KISAN
₹949 crore for Shree Anna Abhiyan
₹547 crore for Crop Diversification Programme
₹326 crore for Development of Potato, vegetables & Spices
₹310 crore for Popularisation of Agricultural implements, equipment & diesel pumpsets
₹100 crore for Promotion of Agri-entrepreneurship for Women SHG
₹152 crore as grants to OUAAT for agricultural research, education, and infrastructure
₹191 crore for World Bank assisted REWARD project,
₹52 crore for Support to Farmer Producers Organisation
₹189 crore for National food security Mission
₹98 crore for National Horticulture Mission
₹155 crore for Rastriya Krushi Vikas Yojana
₹327 crore for Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana
₹600 crore under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) for crop insurance for farmers
₹830 crore for interest subvention on crop loan
₹165 crore for Corpus Fund for Odisha State Cooperative Marketing Federation Ltd
₹344 crore for Odisha Matsya Mission
₹189 crore Prant Sampada Samruddhi Yojana (PSSY)
₹220 crore for Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
₹102 crore for Dughdha Banya Mission
₹65 crore for Ksheer Dhara Mission
₹38 crore for Govansha Suraksha Yojana
₹37 crore for GOMATA (Goal for Management and Treatment of Animals)
₹55 crore for National Livestock Health and Diseases Control Programme

HEALTH

- ₹5450 crore provided for Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana, which includes
₹3056 crore towards Establishment and other cost
₹1033 crore for NIRAMAYA (free medicine)
₹236 crore for NIDAN,
₹122 crore for SAMMPurNA(IMR/MMR reduction),
₹1281 crore for Swasthya Sahaya,
₹1211 crore for Odisha Comprehensive Cancer Care Plan and
₹350 crore for Ambulance Service(EMAS)
₹1314 crore provided for Ama Hospital
₹2462 crore for Mukhya Mantri Swasthya Seva Mission, which includes
₹1000 crore for Infrastructure Development of Health Institutes and
₹1100 crore for Redevelopment Programme of SCB MCH
₹884 crore provided for NIRMAL
₹364 crore for Bio-Medical Waste Management
₹50 crore for KHUSHI
₹50 crore provided for Upgradation of Medical College, Cuttack
₹50 crore for Odisha University of Health Sciences, Bhubaneswar
₹2,095 crore earmarked for CSS - National Health Mission
₹338 crore for PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Care Infrastructure Mission (PM-BHIM) schemes
₹500 crore for Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

EDUCATION

- ₹26,391 crore for the School and Mass Education Department
₹50 crore Godabarisha Mishra Adarsha Prathamika Vidyalaya
₹409 crore for the Gangadhar Meher Siksha Man akbrudhi Yojana
₹332 crore under Panchasakha Sikhya Seta
₹139 crore provided for Mukhyamantri Shiksha Puraskar
₹108 crore provided for Mukhyamantri Chhatrachartri Paridhi Yojana
₹935 crore for Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya
₹997 crore for PM POSHAN
₹258 crore towards State Support to PM POSHAN
₹3,791 crore for Samagra Siksha,

SPORTS & YOUTH SERVICES

- ₹952 crore provided for the Development & Management of Sports and other Sports Infrastructure
₹100 crore provided for Yuva Shakti,
₹60 crore provided for Training & Coaching
₹60 crore provided for financial assistance to outstanding sports persons
₹65 crore provided for organizing Sports Competition

WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT, MISSION SHAKTI

- ₹475 crore towards State Support to Samagra Siksha
₹714 crore for Strengthening Teaching - Learning and Results for States (STARS)
₹240 crore for PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)
₹1170 crore is provided for Pre-matric and Post-matric scholarship of ST,SC, OBC, SEBC students
₹3,478 crore for Higher Education Department
₹280 crore for Infrastructure Development of Universities and Colleges under Higher Education Department
₹54 crore under Godavarishi Vidyaarthi Prasthana Yojana for Distribution of Laptops to Meritorious Students
₹210 crore for Ama College Ama Gaurav
₹50 crore for Odia University at Satyabadi
₹36 crore for Odisha University Research and Innovation
₹155 crore for Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (USHA)
₹1583 crore for Skill Development and Technical Education
₹200 crore provided for Odisha Skill Development Project Assisted by ADB
₹31 crore provided for CM-Aspire
₹262 crore provided for Infrastructure Development of Engineering Schools, colleges, ITIs, Polytechnics, and Technological Universities under SD & TE Department
₹100 crore provided for Odisha University of Technology & Research (OUTR), Bhubaneswar
₹122 crore provided for VSSUT, Burla

HOUSING

- ₹6090 crore under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY)-Gramin
₹692 crore under under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY)-Urban
₹105 crore under Antyodaya Gruha Yojana including interest subvention
₹1100 crore for Rural Urban Transition

DRINKING WATER & SANITATION (RURAL)

- ₹1,436 crore for Mukhya Mantri Shakti Bikash Yojana
₹1,436 crore for Mukhya Mantri Shakti Sanrakshana Abhiyaan
₹56 crore for Dindayal Upadhyay Gramin Bidyutikarn Yojana
₹303 crore for Share Capital Investment in OPGC
₹700 crore for Working Capital Loan to GRIDCO

ROADS, RAILWAYS & TRANSPORT

- ₹600 crore for development of Railway projects
₹372 crore for Civil Aviation
₹150 crore has been proposed for Implementation of Subsidy under Electric Vehicle Policy
₹839 crore for Construction of Bus Stand
₹32 crore for Operation and Management of High level Bus stand
₹1068 crore Gramanchal Paribahan,
₹1990 crore for bridge projects under Setu Bandhan Yojana
₹45 crore for GIA to Odisha Road Safety Society
₹10 crore for Solutium fund for hit & run case
₹21 crore for Odisha Transport Drivers and Workers Welfare Scheme
₹74 crore for rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)
₹6180 crore for Road Development Programme & ₹15 crore for State Highway Development Project
₹1000 crore for Odisha Metro Rail Transport
₹4100 crore for State Road Fund & ₹40 crore for road reconstruction plan in LWE affected areas
₹2,319 crore for construction of Rural roads under RD Department

ENERGY

- ₹1,436 crore for Mukhya Mantri Shakti Bikash Yojana
₹1,436 crore for Mukhya Mantri Shakti Sanrakshana Abhiyaan
₹56 crore for Dindayal Upadhyay Gramin Bidyutikarn Yojana
₹303 crore for Share Capital Investment in OPGC
₹700 crore for Working Capital Loan to GRIDCO

FOREST, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE

- ₹1,168 crore to be spent under CAMPA for afforestation and wildlife activities
₹100 crore for Mukhyamantri Kendu Patra Tolai Yojana
₹35 crore for increasing green cover in the state
₹62 crore is for JICA assisted Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project Phase-II
₹50 crore for development and beautification of Nandanakanan Zoo
₹42 crore proposed for Green Mahanadi Mission
₹20 crore under development and promotion of Ecotourism
₹21 crore for Management & Development of Elephant Corridor
₹60 crore proposed for Wildlife Protection & Conservation Measures

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- ₹122 crore for Grants to IPICOL,
₹200 crore for Land Bank scheme
₹60 crore for Industrial Infrastructure Development Fund (IIDF)
₹50 crore under Din Dayal Karmachari Niwas in Industrial Townships (SCDF)
₹24 crore financial assistance for development of Industrial

PLANNING & CONVERGENCE

- ₹500 crore towards Grants to Western Odisha Development Council (WODC)
₹441 crore towards MLAD Fund
₹200 crore for KIB, Bikash Yojana
₹50 crore under the Scheme SETU
₹29 crore for Kandhamal 'o' Gajapati Bikash Yojana

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- ₹3,300 crore for Disaster Management including ₹2,476 crore under State Disaster Response and Mitigation Fund (SDRMF) and ₹1,424 crore under National Disaster Response and Mitigation Fund (NDRMF)

INTERNAL SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

- ₹118 crore for Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)
₹56 crore for FAST Track Special Courts (FTSCs) including exclusive POCSO Courts
₹12 crore for the Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CTNS) project and ₹30 crore has been proposed for Victim Compensation Fund

ODIA LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

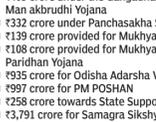
- ₹420 crore provided for the promotion of Odia Language, Culture, and Heritage
₹200 crore corpus fund for Odia Asmita
₹72 crore for Mukhyamantri Kalakara Sahitya Yojana
₹25 crore for organisation of cultural function & district/state level book exhibition
₹15 crore for conservation and protection of monuments
₹10 crore for State Museum

SECTORAL ALLOCATIONS

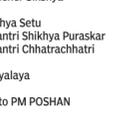
IRRIGATION, FLOOD CONTROL & WATER USE EFFICIENCY

- ₹814 crore for construction of In-stream Storage Structures to fulfil the long-felt needs of the irrigation
₹1125 crore for the 2nd phase of Parvati Giri Mega Lift Irrigation scheme
₹194 crore to revive defunct Community Lift Irrigation Projects
₹400 crore under Mukhya Mantri Adibandha Tiri Yojana (MATY)
₹1,036 crore for strengthening of flood control embankments and drainage improvement works in vulnerable areas
₹1,872 crore for Water Storage & Irrigation Development Project

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT



EDUCATION



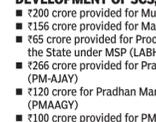
HOUSING



DRINKING WATER & SANITATION (RURAL)



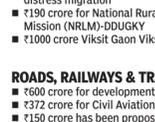
ROADS, RAILWAYS & TRANSPORT



ENERGY



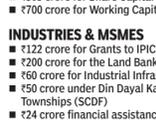
FOREST, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



PLANNING & CONVERGENCE



DISASTER MANAGEMENT



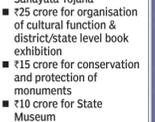
INTERNAL SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE



ODIA LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND HERITAGE



AGRICULTURE & ALLIED SECTOR ACTIVITIES



HEALTH



EDUCATION



SPORTS & YOUTH SERVICES



WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT, MISSION SHAKTI



HOUSING



DRINKING WATER & SANITATION (RURAL)



ROADS, RAILWAYS & TRANSPORT



ENERGY



FOREST, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



PLANNING & CONVERGENCE



DISASTER MANAGEMENT



INTERNAL SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE



ODIA LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND HERITAGE



AGRICULTURE & ALLIED SECTOR ACTIVITIES



HEALTH



EDUCATION



SPORTS & YOUTH SERVICES



WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT, MISSION SHAKTI



HOUSING



DRINKING WATER & SANITATION (RURAL)



ROADS, RAILWAYS & TRANSPORT



ENERGY



FOREST, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



PLANNING & CONVERGENCE



DISASTER MANAGEMENT



INTERNAL SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE



ODIA LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND HERITAGE



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SPORTS & YOUTH SERVICES



WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT, MISSION SHAKTI



HOUSING



DRINKING WATER & SANITATION (RURAL)



ROADS, RAILWAYS & TRANSPORT



ENERGY



FOREST, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



The BJP said AAP leaders are lying and the Centre gave much more than the Budget allocated for it
ATISHI MARLENA | DELHI FINANCE MINISTER

FLIGHT DELAYS IMPACTED 11L PASSENGERS TILL MAY

As many as 11 lakh passengers were impacted by flight delays this year till May, and airlines shelled out nearly ₹13 crore for providing facilities to them, according to the Civil Aviation Ministry. In 2023, as many as 22.51 lakh passengers were impacted due to flight delays and carriers spent over ₹26.53 crore for them



of the day quote

The Constitution of India under the 7th Schedule list 1- Union list, item 10, clearly specifies that foreign affairs and all matters which bring the Union into relation with any foreign country, are the sole prerogative of the Union Government
RANDHIR JAISWAL | MEA SPOKESPERSON

The irregularities in the All-India NEET-UG Medical Examination is a serious issue and has reached Parliament and the Supreme Court. Whatever be the result, the pain and mental agony caused to lakhs of candidates and their families will always haunt them
MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

The BJP is now raising a hue and cry about the MUDA alternative site scam. The chief minister has already ordered an investigation. Let the opposition parties provide any documentary evidence they have
D K SHIVAKUMAR | K'TAKA DEPUTY CM

INDIA bloc to stage protest July 30: AAP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: The INDIA bloc of Opposition parties will hold a rally July 30 at Jantar Mantar here to raise the issue of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's declining health inside Tihar jail, the AAP said Thursday. The Aam Aadmi Party has been accusing the BJP of "conspiring to kill" Kejriwal in jail and cited his medical report to show that his sugar levels had fallen 26 times between June 3 and July 7. The party, a constituent of the INDIA bloc, has been accusing the BJP-led central government and Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena of playing with Kejriwal's life. "The INDIA bloc will hold a big rally at Jantar Mantar July 30 to raise the issue of Kejriwal's falling health," the AAP said. During a press conference, Atishi was asked about the rally and she hit out at the BJP over the Chief Minister's de-

clining health. "The Bharatiya Janata Party is conspiring against the people of Delhi in every way. It is stopping the work of the people of Delhi. It is stopping the money of the people of Delhi. The BJP got Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain who worked for the people of Delhi arrested," she claimed.

Atishi further claimed that when the BJP got to know that Kejriwal could get bail from the Supreme Court, they got him arrested by the CBI. "They know that Kejriwal has diabetes since last 30 years. His weight has gone down by 8.5 kg in custody. A glucometer monitors his sugar levels during the entire day. The data of this device is shared with the LG and the Centre. They know that Kejriwal's sugar levels have declined to dangerous levels," she said. Atishi claimed that the Chief Minister's sugar levels have gone down 34 times.

Judicial custody of Kejriwal, Sisodia, Kavitha extended

New Delhi: A Delhi court Thursday extended the judicial custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in money laundering and corruption cases related to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja extended Kejriwal's custody in a money laundering case, being probed by the Enforcement Directorate, till July 31, while his judicial custody in a corruption case, lodged by the CBI, was extended till August 8. The judge also extended the judicial custody of Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Bharat Rashtra Samithi leader K Kavitha and other accused till July 31 in the money laundering case. The accused were produced before the court through video conference.

"BJP knew this and got him arrested by CBI. BJP wants that his health should be permanently damaged. All the INDIA bloc parties will protest against Kejriwal's custody and the prevailing danger to his health," she added.

Kejriwal was arrested March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam and has been granted interim bail by the Supreme Court. However, he is currently lodged in Tihar in a connected CBI case.

B'desh strongly objects to Mamata's 'shelter' remark



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: India Thursday confirmed receiving a note from Dhaka that conveyed its objection to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks offering shelter to people affected by violent-clashes in that country.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, appearing to disapprove of Banerjee's comments, said matters that bring "the Union into relation with any foreign country, are the sole prerogative" of the central government.

"I can confirm that we have received such a communication from the Bangladesh side. It is essentially on the lines described in the reports," Jaiswal said during his weekly media briefing

while replying to a question. "I would underline that under the Seventh schedule -- List one -- Union List -- item 10 of our Constitution, the conduct of foreign affairs and all matters which bring the Union into relation with any foreign country, are the sole prerogative of the Union government," he said.

In her remarks Sunday, Banerjee also referred to the UN Resolution on refugees as justification for her stand over the possible humanitarian crisis that may emerge on account of the severe law and order breakdown that gripped Bangladesh.

"I should not be speaking on the affairs of Bangladesh since that is a sovereign nation and whatever needs to be said on the issue is a subject matter of the Centre," Banerjee said.

Bangladesh was reeling under deadly clashes with protesting students demanding the Sheikh Hasina-led government to scrap a controversial job quota system.

Over 100 people were killed in the clashes that began weeks ago. Law enforcement authorities in Bangladesh had imposed a nationwide curfew.

Naidu compares Jagan Reddy to drug lord Pablo Escobar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, July 25: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu Thursday compared YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar as he slammed the state of law and order and alleged drug menace in the past five years.

Releasing a white paper on law and order and ganja (marijuana) prevalence, Naidu claimed that he never saw such a situation like how it was when Reddy ruled.

"Only one person can be compared to what happened in Andhra, and it is Pablo Escobar," he said in the Assembly, in an apparent reference to the drug menace. The CM further said that Escobar was a drug lord who illegally sold drugs worth billions of dollars and also went on to kill leaders and politicians who opposed him.

Calling Escobar a 'narcoterrorist', Naidu alleged that a similar situation had emerged in Andhra Pradesh under the YSRCP regime (2019-24) when ganja was allegedly freely available.

ANTI-INDIA ELEMENTS

MEA targets Canada for double standards



AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 25: India Thursday reiterated that it expects Canada to take action against anti-India elements otherwise "the rule of law and respect for pluralism" in the country will continue to be "severely undermined".

"We would like to see stronger action at the same level of seriousness on the threats posed to us as well," he added.

With another Hindu temple in Alberta's capital Edmonton vandalised with hateful graffiti Tuesday, New Delhi has slammed Ottawa for its inability to rein in the extremists.

The MEA stated that it has "strongly" taken up the matter with the Canadian authorities, both in New Delhi and in the Canadian capital.

"We condemn the vandalism. We expect Canada to take action against anti-India elements who have repeatedly threatened Indian leaders, institutions, airlines, and diplomats with violence
RANDHIR JAISWAL | MEA SPOKESPERSON

pluralism in Canada will continue to be severely undermined," he added. Tuesday's incident added to the series of attacks targeting Hindu establishments in Canada.

"During the last few years, Hindu temples in the Greater Toronto Area, British Columbia, and other places in Canada have been vandalised with hateful graffiti. Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of 'Sikhs for Justice' last year publicly called for Hindus to go back to India," Canadian Member of Parliament Chandra Arya wrote on X July 23.

"Khalistan supporters publicly celebrated in Brampton and Vancouver the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and brandished images of deadly weapons. As I have always been saying, Khalistani extremists seem to get away with ease with their public rhetoric of hate and violence," he added.

High drama inside Bihar Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, July 25: Opposition members overturned the table meant for the staff inside the Bihar Assembly and sat on a dharna outside the Speaker's chamber alleging that they were denied the opportunity to speak till Thursday, the penultimate day of the session.

Speaker Nand Kishor Yadav adjourned the House till 4.50 PM, just half-an-hour into the post-lunch session, slamming the unruly MLAs for "showing your character by causing hurt to the staff".

Earlier in the day, the assembly witnessed intense drama during the pre-lunch session when Opposition members conducted parallel "proceedings" within the well.

Several legislators had arrived wearing black scarves in protest against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's disrespectful behaviour towards women MLAs the previous day, as well as the lathi-charge on Congress workers marching towards the Vidhan Sabha to highlight alleged failures of the NDA government.

Mahboob Alam, the CPI(ML) Liberation legislature party leader, had been seated in a chair and mockingly assigned the role of "Speaker" in the parallel Assembly.

The Opposition MLAs later staged a walkout, alleging their voices were being ignored.

In the Zero Hour, the Speaker read out a number of adjournment motions, moved by members of various Opposition parties, and quipped "it is strange that those who moved these motions did not even bother to remain present".

Following further disturbances in the afternoon, RJD leader Kumar Sarvjeet, part of the protesting group outside the Speaker's chamber, told reporters, "MLAs from the Opposition have not been allowed to speak for a minute since the current session began July 22".

SHORT TAKES

Girl raped at gun point

New Delhi: A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped at gun point and pushed off the fifth floor of a building in southwest Delhi's Dwarka, police said Thursday. The incident happened Monday when the accused barged into the victim house while her parents were away, the police said. The man then took the girl to a building nearby where he raped her and then pushed her off the fifth floor of the building, they said.

Govt docs go on indefinite strike

Chandigarh: Thousands of government doctors in Haryana went on an indefinite strike Thursday, hitting services in state-run hospitals with long queues outside OPDs and patients complaining they were being treated by interns or retired doctors. The strike has been called by the Haryana Civil Medical Services Association, which represents government doctors in the state, to protest the non-fulfilment of their various demands. In a bid to resolve the issue, government representatives are holding talks with the doctors' body here.

Two MLAs disqualified

Ranchi: Jharkhand Assembly Speaker's Tribunal Thursday disqualified two legislators under the anti-defection law with effect from July 26. The order disqualifying JMM's Lobin Hembrom and Congress's Jai Prakash Bhai Patel from the House came on the eve of the Assembly's six-day monsoon session beginning Friday. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the BJP had initiated proceedings under the anti-defection law against Hembrom and Patel respectively in the Speaker's Tribunal.

5 Naxalites surrender

Sukma: Five Naxalites, collectively carrying a cash reward of ₹19 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh Thursday, police said. They turned themselves in before senior police officials here citing that they were disappointed with atrocities committed by senior Naxalites and "inhuman" and "hollow" Maoist ideology, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

Rlys to replace loco pilots' iron trunks with trolley bags

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: If things go according to plan, loco pilots and guards will no longer have to carry their personal belongings and official equipment in iron trunks and can use trolley bags instead.

In a letter to all its zones, the Railway Board asked them to provide trolley bags to the loco pilots and guards.

However, it remained pending for implementation for another 11 years due to stiff Opposition from loco pilots and guards. In 2018, the Board once again took a decision to push the scheme in two zones - Northern Railways and South Central Railways - for trial.

After positive feedback from the various trials, the Board issued a final order February 21, 2022 in which it said, "Trolley bags may be provided to loco pilots and guards in lieu of line box (iron trunk). Zonal Railways may decide to procure & dis-

tribute or give allowance in lieu of trolley bags purchased by the crew themselves. The allowance to be limited to ₹5,000 for every 3 years."

The order, besides directing departments concerned to standardise equipment in trolley bags, also asked to provide soft copies of Railway rules and manuals to reduce the weight of the trolley bag. But the All India Guards Council and other stakeholders concerned challenged this order at various legal fora, including Central Administrative Tribunal's (CAT) Principal Bench at New Delhi, forcing the Railways to put it on hold.

"Whenever a loco pilot (train driver) or a guard (officially called train manager) signs on for train duty, he keeps an iron trunk weighing over 20 kg to the engine/guard cabin as it carries Railway norms, various equipment as well as his personal belongings," a rail-

way official said. "To carry the heavy iron trunk, they are provided with a porter who takes the box to their respective cabins," the official added.

The Railway Board emphasised before



of trains on account of loading/unloading of heavy boxes to

"Zonal Railways are requested to start implementing the policy decision of providing trolley bags to loco pilots and guards," the Railway Board said in the letter dated July 19

According to railway officials, the Board had initiated this move in 2006 with a comprehensive instruction

A year later, it issued another guideline after discussions with trade unions for its implementation on a trial basis

the order was arbitrary and that the Railways was imposing duties of box porters/box boys on train managers.

The other crucial concern of the guards union was that they had to carry detonators composed of potassium chlorate, sulphur, sand, binder and neutraliser issued by Ordnance Factory Board to Indian Railways for specific purposes during train opera-

and from the engine or guard's coach. On the other hand, the guards' union argued that

the CAT several benefits of doing away with the services of porters. For instance, it said that besides monetary savings due to termination of Box Boy contracts; it would also save detention time

tions. They argued that often they have to leave their cabin and come out of it during train operation at many isolated locations.

"In such a situation, these detonators are safe in the iron trunk which is locked and difficult to carry. However, it is easy to take away the carry bags with detonators from the Guard's cabin," said SP Singh, former general secretary of All India Guards Council.

Finally, February 8, the CAT refused to grant any relief to the guards' body and said it would not interfere with the railway ministry's order paving the way for the Board to implement its decision.

Following the CAT order, the Board July 19, issued letters to all the zones asking them to start providing trolley bags to loco pilots and guards. The guard's body has now challenged the CAT's order in the Delhi High Court hoping for a favourable decision.

national



So much for 'maya J&K'. For all the talk of normalcy, peace, tourism & the G-20 tamasha in Srinagar, J&K continues to be the target of US state department travel advisories. The Modi government has been able to change nothing

FLOOD SITUATION IMPROVES

Assam's flood situation improved Thursday with the water level of the major rivers receding and the number of people affected by the deluge declining to 66,267 in nine districts, an official bulletin said



POST OF THE DAY

A Muslim MP standing in the parliament and asking the government to run a train to hindu pilgrimage site Vaishno Devi from her constituency is what defines the beauty of India. This is the India that Modi and Shah fear. Well done

SHORT TAKES

CM Mann to boycott Niti Aayog meeting

Chandigarh: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Thursday said he will boycott the Niti Aayog meeting, which is to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi July 27, as he slammed the Centre for not announcing anything for his state in the Union Budget. Mann further slammed the BJP-led NDA government for withholding the state's funds.

Part of NH-3 closed in Kullu flash floods

Shimla/Manali: Flash floods triggered by a cloudburst swept away three houses and critically damaged another one in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district, leaving four families homeless, officials said Thursday. They said the deluge struck late Wednesday night. No casualties have been reported so far. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Manali Raman Sharma said the Beas Kund Power House was also damaged in the flood.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Ramavtar Kansal, S/o Late Harnandrai Agrawal, resident of Brahmachari, Ward No.-16, P.O./P.S./Dist.: Bargarh, PIN-768028, Odisha declare by this affidavit No. CF-38/24/07/2024 Dtd.- 25.07.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as RAMAWATAR AGRAWAL for all future purposes.

I, Kiranlata Kansal, W/o Ramawatar Agrawal, resident of Brahmachari, Ward No.-16, P.O./P.S./Dist.: Bargarh, PIN-768028, Odisha declare by this affidavit Dtd.- 25.07.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as KIRANLATA AGRAWAL for all future purposes.

Before the Notary Public, Berhampur, Odisha on 25.07.2024, I, Santosh Maharana, S/o Baramam Maharana, Panda Colony, Vill - New Khajuria, Near Fulda, P.S. - Gosaninugaon, P.O. - Berhampur, Dist. - Ganjam do hereby solemnly affirm that in my HSC Certificate (Serial No. - Mo228219) my name has been wrongly mentioned as Santosh Kumar Maharana. Both the names are same and one person i.e myself. Henceforth, I shall be known as Santosh Maharana for all purposes.

No systemic breach in sanctity of NEET-UG: SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: There is no evidence to conclude that the entire result of NEET-UG, 2024 was vitiated and there was a "systemic breach" in the sanctity of the examination, the Supreme Court has said while trashing pleas for re-test on grounds of paper leak and other malpractices.

July 23, the top court dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the controversy-ridden exam and the order was uploaded Wednesday night.

"At the present stage, there is an absence of material on the record to lead to the conclusion that the entire result of the examination stands vitiated or that there was a systemic breach in the sanctity of the examination," said the 14-page interim order penned by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud.

The detailed and reasoned judgement on as many as 40 petitions would be delivered later.

The bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said, "The data which has been produced on the record city-wise and centre-wise and the comparison of data for the

The top court July 23 dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the controversy-ridden exam and the order was uploaded Wednesday night

years 2022, 2023 and 2024 are not indicative of a systemic leak of the question paper impacting the sanctity of the examination."

It said ordering a re-test this year "would be replete with serious consequences for over two million students who have appeared in the examination."

The order said adopting such a course of action would lead to a disruption of admission schedule, setting back the entire process by several months, and would lead to a cascading effect on the course of medical education.

It said the order of re-test would also impact the availability of qualified medical professionals in the future and "cause a serious element of disadvantage to students belong-

ing to marginalised communities and weaker sections for whom reservation has been made in the allocation of seats."

The top court also asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to revise its merit list by treating the answer suggested by a panel of three experts of IIT Delhi to a controversial physics question as correct.

As per earlier judgements, a re-test can be ordered if segregation of beneficiaries of fraud from genuinely successful candidates is not possible.

It said an interim order was needed for providing certainty and finality to a dispute which affected the careers of over two million students.

"The fact that a leak of the NEET (UG) 2024 paper took place at Hazaribagh in the state of Jharkhand and at Patna in the state of Bihar is not in dispute," the order said.

Referring to the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) status report, the order said the probe is continuing and, as per the evidence which emerged during the probe so far, there were about 155 students, who took up tests at examination centres in Hazaribagh and Patna, are prima facie beneficiaries of the fraud.

While refusing to order a re-test, the bench said it was guided by the well-settled test of whether it is possible to segregate tainted students from those whose candidature does not suffer from any taint.

No student, who is revealed to have engaged in fraud, would be entitled to claim a vested right in continuation of the admission in the future by virtue of the findings in this judgment, it said.



RAIN FUN: Children use umbrella to shield themselves during rains while commuting to school on an e-rickshaw in Faridabad, Haryana

LS adjourned twice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: The Lok Sabha was adjourned twice in the post-lunch period Thursday as a war of words broke out between the treasury and Opposition benches, triggered by Congress MP Charanjit Singh Channi's spat with BJP's Ravneet Singh Bittu.

Participating in a debate on the Union Budget, Channi referred to the assassination of Bittu's grandfather, former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh. This led to a war of words between Channi and Bittu, who recently quit the Congress to join the BJP.

Bittu, the Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing Industries, countered by making certain personal remarks against Channi and former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, triggering an uproar.

Amid the angry exchange of words, Congress member Amrinder Singh Raja Warring tried to enter the Well of the House, but was stopped by Leader

of Opposition Rahul Gandhi. From the treasury benches, Bittu also tried to enter the Well. BJP member Sandhya Ray, who was in the chair, then adjourned the proceedings for 30 minutes till 2 pm.

When the House reconvened, Defence Minister and Deputy Leader of the Lok Sabha Rajnath Singh urged Speaker Om Birla to remove any unparliamentary references and continue with the debate. Birla also directed the treasury and the Opposition members to maintain the dignity of the House, adding that ministers especially should not break the rules.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal intervened and accused the Congress MP of misleading the House, saying he should authenticate the allegations he was making. As he alleged that National Security Act provisions were invoked against protesting farmers, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Channi should authenticate the allegations and accused him of misleading the House.

INS BRAHMAPUTRA FIRE

Deceased soldier gets emotional farewell in Rajasthan village

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, July 25: The mortal remains of Indian Navy leading seaman Sitendra Singh, who died in a fire incident on INS Brahmaputra in Mumbai, were consigned to flames in his village in Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu district Thursday.

Jhunjhunu Collector Chinnmayee Gopal, SP Rajarshi Raj Verma and others paid floral tributes to Singh. He was given an emotional farewell in his village in Rajasthan.

The cremation was conducted at a farm near the house of Singh. His brother Manendra Singh lit the funeral pyre.

Earlier, a 'Triranga yatra' (Tricolour march) was taken out with the last procession of Singh in his village located in Jhunjhunu district. Singh went missing following a major fire onboard India's frontline ship INS Brahmaputra at the naval dockyard in Mumbai Sunday evening. His body was found Wednesday.

The body reached Surajgarh-Chidawa bypass Thursday afternoon from where the Tricolour march began to his village, Dangan.

Hundreds of local people reached the bypass with their vehicles and escorted the decorated military truck carrying the mortal remains of Singh. They raised 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogans and showered flowers.

"Adm Dinesh K Tripathi #CNS & all personnel of #IndianNavy mourn the loss of life & pay tribute to Sitendra Singh, Ag LS (UW) who lost his life in the unfortunate incident onboard INS Brahmaputra at Mumbai and extend heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family," said the India Navy spokesperson in a post on X.

US REMARKS ON INDIA-RUSSIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: India Thursday rejected Washington's concerns over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Moscow as it asserted that all countries have the "freedom of choice" in a multipolar world and everyone should be mindful of such realities.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India has a long-standing relationship with Russia which is based on "mutuality" of interests. "In a multipolar world, all countries have the freedom of choice. It is essential for everybody to be mindful of and appreciate such realities," he said. "India has a long-standing re-

lationship with Russia that is based on mutuality of interests," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

His response came when asked about US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu's comments on Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia earlier this month.

Lu told a Congressional hearing Tuesday that the US was disappointed by the "symbolism" and "timing" of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia.

The Biden administration official especially highlighted that the Indian prime minister paid the visit to Moscow Washington was hosting a summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Must be mindful: MEA



"I share your concern about this visit...and we are trying very hard to communicate those concerns directly to the Indians," Lu said after Republican Congressman Joe Wilson raised concerns about Modi's visit. At the same time Lu, referred to Modi's meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy in June. On the outcomes of Modi's trip, Lu said: "We did not see any new major defence deals. We saw no major discussion of technology cooperation." "In addition, you have Modi having said in front of Putin, on live television, his feeling that the war in Ukraine could not be won on the battlefield and the pain that he felt watching the death of children in war."

Following Modi's visit to Moscow July 8 and 9, several other Biden administration officials expressed concerns over India's ties with Russia.

Speaking at an event July 11 US ambassador Eric Garcetti too appeared to be critical of Modi's trip to Russia.

Rashtrapati Bhavan's Durbar Hall, Ashok Hall renamed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: Venues for different ceremonial functions, Rashtrapati Bhavan's iconic 'Durbar Hall' and 'Ashok Hall' were Thursday renamed 'Ganatantra Mandap' and 'Ashok Mandap', respectively.

Last year, the famous Mughal Gardens on the Rashtrapati Bhavan premises was rechristened 'Amrit Udyan'. "Rashtrapati Bhavan, the office and the residence of the President of India, is a symbol of the nation, and an invaluable heritage of the people. Continuous efforts are being made to make it more accessible to people. There has been a consistent endeavour to make the

ambience of the Rashtrapati Bhavan reflective of the Indian cultural values and ethos," a statement issued by the President's Secretariat said.

Accordingly, President Droupadi Murmu is pleased to rename two of the important halls of Rashtrapati Bhavan - 'Durbar Hall' and 'Ashok Hall' - as 'Ganatantra Mandap' and 'Ashok Mandap', respectively, it said.

"Renaming 'Ashok Hall' as 'Ashok Mandap' brings uniformity in language and removes the traces of anglicisation while upholding the key values associated with the word 'Ashok'," said the statement issued on a day Murmu completed two years of



her presidency.

'Durbar Hall', located under the central dome of Rashtrapati Bhavan, is the venue of important ceremonies and celebrations such as the presentation of

national awards.

"The term 'Durbar' refers to courts and assemblies of Indian rulers and the British. It lost relevance after India became a Republic, that is, 'Ganatantra'.

President becomes teacher for a day

President Droupadi Murmu, who completed two years in office Thursday, took up the role of a teacher and interacted with students on the issue of global warming and ways to check it. During an interactive session with Class IX students of Dr Rajendra Prasad Kendriya Vidyalaya in the President's Estate here, she emphasised the need for water conservation and encouraged them to plant more trees in a bid to reduce the impact of climate change.

The concept of 'Ganatantra' is deeply rooted in Indian society since the ancient times, making 'Ganatantra Mandap' an apt name for the venue," the statement said.

Its corridor displays the busts of former Indian Presidents, carved by noted sculptors from across the country. Six tall banners in deep red with the national emblem of India in gold

also adorn the hall.

Against the wall is placed a fifth century AD statue of Lord Buddha on a crimson velvet background. In front of this statue is placed the President's chair. Earlier, two thrones for the viceroy and the vicereine were placed at this spot. On renaming the 'Ashok Hall', the President's office said it was originally a ballroom.

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international



I could not agree with you more about our disappointment about the symbolism and the timing of Prime Minister Modi's trip to Moscow. We are having those tough conversations with our Indian friends
DONALD LU | ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

JAPAN POPULATION FALLS
Japan's total population marked the 15th straight year of decline, according to government data released, dropping by more than a half-million people as the population ages and births remain low



of the day quote

For 76 years, we have been led by an inept political group that has driven us to bankruptcy. For Sri Lanka to grow, we need to crush corruption. We need to leverage our natural resources to boost income generation
SARATH FONSEKA | FORMER ARMY CHIEF, SRI LANKA

We call on Israel to hold perpetrators of settler violence to account and to cease its ongoing settlement activity, which only inflames tensions and further undermines stability and prospects for a two-state solution
PENNY WONG | MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AUSTRALIA

Considering all the events that are taking place in the world as a whole and in the Eurasian region today, our (Russia-Syria) meeting today seems very important
BASHAR ASSAD | PRESIDENT, SYRIA

'China making inroads into key choke points in Indian Ocean'

CHINESE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN RECENT YEARS INCLUDE CHINESE PORTS IN PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA, MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN DJIBOUTI AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS IN THE MALDIVES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, July 25: China is making inroads into key choke points along the Indian Ocean, obstructing the free maritime routes, and threatening the national security and economic interests of both the US and its friends and allies in South Asia, an influential American lawmaker said.

The Indian Ocean is a crucial channel for global trade, an estimated 80 per cent of maritime oil trade and 40 per cent of world trade passes through the Indian Ocean, Congresswoman Young Kim said during a Congressional hearing here.

Young, who is the chairperson of the Subcommittee on Indo-Pacific in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, also said Tuesday, "We cannot forget the significance of Indo in the Indo-Pacific."

Explaining how the South

Asian region faces a dynamic geopolitical landscape that presents challenges for the US policy objectives, she said, South Asia holds "immense significance" for the US foreign policy and national security interests.

Young listed all the recent Chinese development projects in recent years, Chinese ports in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, military installations in Djibouti and infrastructure investments in the Maldives and drew attention to how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is making inroads into key choke points along the maritime routes and obstructing the right to freely navigate the Indian Ocean waters.

"These threaten the US national security and economic interests and those of our friends and allies in the region," Young said.

The resource-rich South China Sea in the Indo-Pacific region is widely seen as a potential



flashpoint for global conflict. China claims most of the South China Sea as its own, while The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims over the maritime area. Though the US is not a claimant to the South China Sea, it says the waters are crucial to

its national interest of guaranteeing free passage through seas worldwide.

The US Navy regularly conducts freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, saying the US is "defending every nation's right to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows."

Major setback to Pak's ruling coalition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, July 25: The election commission has notified 39 successful MPs as lawmakers of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party following a landmark Supreme Court directive.

The decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) may help the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) become the largest political party in Parliament.

The ECP finally took action to implement the July 12 judgment of the apex court which ruled that the PTI was a legitimate political party and those lawmakers who were elected as independents could join it.

PTI was not allowed to nominate candidates for the February 8 general elections as it was deprived of its symbol of cricket bat due to failure to hold elections. However, its supported independent candidates won more seats than any other party.

Later, the party decided that they should join the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to secure a share of the seats reserved for women and minorities. However, the ECP refused to award reserved seats to the SIC, saying that it had not won any seats and all its members won independently.

The SIC filed an appeal in the Peshawar High Court, which rejected it.

The matter landed in the Supreme Court which July 12 declared that the PTI was a political party and eligible to receive reserved seats for women and non-Muslims in the national and provincial assemblies. The ruling meant that independent members of the Parliament who won elections with the support of PTI could join it.

Earlier, PTI's 80 elected members had joined SIC.

The judgement explained that 39 members, who were shown by the ECP as PTI candidates, belonged to the party, while the rest of the 41 independents would have to file duly notarised statements before the commission within 15 days, explaining that they contested the February 8 elections as a candidate of a particular political party.

The ECP after discussion noted that 39 members, who were declared as PTI lawmakers, had mentioned their affiliation with the party in their nomination papers before the elections.

SHORT TAKES

Boat capsizes kills African migrants

Abuja: More than a dozen migrants died and at least 150 others are missing after their boat capsized off Mauritania on their way to Europe, the International Organization for Migration said, triggering a frantic search and rescue operation. There were 300 migrants on the boat that capsized Monday near the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott, and 120 have been rescued by the Mauritanian Coast Guard, the IOM said in a statement Wednesday.

Relief for Khan

Islamabad: A Pakistani court Thursday set aside the physical remand of Imran Khan in connection with 12 cases linked to last year's May 9 riots, in a major relief to the jailed former Prime Minister who has been imprisoned for almost a year. On July 16, an anti-terrorism court granted Punjab police Khan's 10-day physical remand in a dozen cases linked to the May 9 riots.

Typhoon Gaemi hits China

Beijing: Typhoon Gaemi roared into southeastern China Thursday after sweeping across Taiwan, where it killed three people, triggered flooding and sank a freighter before barreling west across the Taiwan Strait. The typhoon, the biggest to hit China's eastern seaboard this year, made landfall in Fujian province, state broadcaster CCTV said.

UKRAINE WAR

RUSSIA OPEN TO TALKS

KREMLIN AGREES TO NEGOTIATIONS WHILE ZELENSKY IS IN POWER BUT NEEDS MORE DETAILS

REUTERS

Moscow, July 25: The Kremlin signalled Thursday it was open to negotiations with Ukraine on ending the conflict while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy remains in power despite publicly doubting his legitimacy to rule.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Wednesday during a visit to China that Kyiv was prepared for talks with Russia provided Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity were fully respected, though he said that Ukraine has seen no sign of that.

The Kremlin, while signalling its readiness for talks on its own terms, has publicly called into question Zelenskyy's mandate to rule, pointing out that his five-year term in office expired in May and that he should have called an election.

Zelenskyy and the West say it is necessary to suspend normal political rules at a time of war and that the Kremlin, given Russia's own tightly-controlled political system, is in no position to criticise.

When asked Thursday whether Russia would be ready to hold talks with Ukraine while Zelenskyy was in power, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters,

"Russia is generally open to a negotiation process. But first we have to understand how ready the Ukrainian side is for this



"Russia is generally open to a negotiation process. But first we have to understand how ready the Ukrainian side is for this and how much the Ukrainian side has permission for this from its handlers"
DMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESMAN, RUSSIA

Putin in June said Russia would end the war in Ukraine, something he calls a special military operation, only if Kyiv agreed to drop its NATO ambitions and hand over the entirety of four provinces claimed by Moscow

and how much the Ukrainian side has permission for this from its handlers."

Moscow depicts Zelenskyy as a US puppet, a characterisation he rejects. "Because so far you see very different statements being made, and it is not quite clear yet. Besides, in addition to the problem with Zelenskyy's legitimacy, there is also a problem with a (Ukrainian) legal ban on having any contacts and negotiations with the Russian side. Therefore, there is still a lot to be clarified and clarifications

to be heard," said Peskov.

Pressed during a conference call if the Kremlin could envisage negotiating with Zelenskyy or categorically ruled out such a possibility, Peskov said:

"The question is not an easy one. From a legal point of view this problem (of his legitimacy) is on the agenda, but from a practical point of view we are open to achieving our goals through negotiations. Therefore, different options are possible here."

Reuters reported in May that Putin was ready to halt the war in Ukraine with a negotiated ceasefire but the Kremlin chief was prepared to fight on if Kyiv and the West did not respond.

Putin in June said Russia would end the war in Ukraine, something he calls a special military operation, only if Kyiv agreed to drop its NATO ambitions and hand over the entirety of four provinces claimed by Moscow, demands Kyiv swiftly rejected as tantamount to surrender.

Netanyahu sketches vague outline for post-war Gaza

REUTERS

Washington, July 25: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sketched a vague outline of a plan for a "deradicalized" post-war Gaza in a speech to Congress Wednesday and touted a potential future alliance between Israel and America's Arab allies.

While dozens of Democrats boycotted his remarks and thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrated nearby, Netanyahu dismissed criticism of an Israeli campaign that has devastated the Palestinian enclave and killed more than 39,000 of its residents, according to Gaza health officials.

Anti-Israel protesters stand with Hamas and "should be ashamed of themselves," Netanyahu said, charging without evidence that they were backed by Israel's foe Iran.

"For all we know, Iran is funding the anti-Israel protests that are going on right now outside this building," he said.

He blamed reports of hunger



Fast-tracking US military aid could dramatically expedite an end to the war in Gaza and help prevent a broader war in the Middle East

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PM, ISRAEL

Many Democrats boycott, criticize political nature of speech
.....
Netanyahu assails protesters as tools of Iran

in Gaza on Hamas, the militant group that rules the Palestinian enclave, and insisted Israel was protecting civilians there. He said Israel was intensely engaged in efforts to free the remaining hostages held by Hamas.



Smoke rises from the Lower Campbell Creek wildfire northwest of Beavertown, British Columbia, Canada
REUTERS

Paris Olympics security sweep upends lives

As part of a vast security operation, authorities have turned to powers, placing 155 people under surveillance measures that strictly limit their movement

REUTERS

Paris, July 25: French paramedic Seifelislam Benadda had just dropped off a patient at hospital July 1, he said, when police informed him he was prohibited from leaving his hometown in the Paris suburbs, saying he was a potential threat to the Olympic Games.

For the next nine days, instead of driving his ambulance, the 28-year-old checked in at the Nogent-sur-Marne police station at midday and fought to overturn the administrative

measure, which alleged he posed a terrorist risk.

As part of a vast security operation for the Paris Games, which start Friday, authorities have turned to powers passed under a 2017 anti-terror law, placing 155 people under surveillance measures that strictly limit their movement and oblige them to register daily with police even though some have never faced criminal charges, according to official data and a Reuters review of cases.

France, which has a recent history of terror attacks, is on its highest state of alert ahead of the Games, including at Friday's opening ceremony on the Seine. Last week, a neo-Nazi was arrested on suspicion of plotting an attack during the passage of the Olympic flame.

Known as MICAS, the surveillance measures had until recently mainly been used to mon-



itor people after prison sentences. In the context of the Olympics, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said at a news conference July 17, the powers were only used to target people he described as "very dangerous" and potentially able to carry out attacks.

However, 17 of the cases reviewed by Reuters targeted people without previous terrorism-related convictions or charges.

In total, the news agency looked at 27 MICAS cases, using court documents and interviews with more than a dozen lawyers and 10 of the people

Two held over suspected attack

Paris: France's anti-terror police PNAF said a second 18-year-old man had been arrested Thursday in connection with plans to commit one or several attacks against people. It did not mention a link to the Olympic Games, which start in Paris July 26, but France is on its highest state of alert as it gears up to host millions of visitors, athletes and world leaders during the event. The suspect, who was arrested in an undisclosed holiday location, was in contact, both in person and through social media networks, with another 18-year-old man arrested Tuesday in southwest France, PNAF said. In May, police arrested an 18-year-old suspected of planning a jihadist attack on the Saint-Etienne stadium, hosting Olympic football.

concerned, finding that in several cases police presented scant evidence to justify the measures.

NEPAL PLANE TRAGEDY

Black box of crashed aircraft found

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, July 25: Nepalese authorities Thursday recovered the black box of the aircraft that crashed here a day before and handed it over to a probe team formed to inquire into the tragic accident that killed 18 persons, including a child.

A Pokhara-bound Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft of Saurya Airlines, carrying 19 people, crashed and caught fire shortly after taking off from the Tribhuvan International Airport here Wednesday, killing 18 people aboard, and seriously injuring the pilot.

The deceased included two crew members, technical staff of the airline, and a family of three, including a four-year-old boy.

Hansa Raj Pandey, deputy director general of the Civil Aviation Authority, said the black

box of the crashed aircraft has been recovered and handed over to a probe team for necessary action.

The probe team is headed by Ratish Chandra Lal, former director general of the Civil Aviation Authority, and includes four other experts. The team has to submit its probe report along with recommendations within 45 days.

The dead bodies are in the process of identification after conducting a post mortem and they will be handed over to the family members by Friday, Pandey said.

Meanwhile, Captain Manish Raj Shakya, the sole survivor of the Surya Airlines air crash, is undergoing treatment at the Kathmandu Medical College here and his condition is said to be still. "Though he is admitted to the ICU, he can speak," hospital sources said.

of the day quote

NHAI is not facing any financial crises which is evident from the fact that NHAI has pre-paid bank loan to the tune of ₹15,700 crore through InvIT monetisation proceeds - ₹6,350 crore in the last financial year and ₹9,350 crore in July 2024

NITIN GADKARI | UNION ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MINISTER

India needs a 'clearer set' of guidelines for approving Foreign Direct Investments from China expeditiously as the system of case-by-case review is slow

SUMAN BERY | VC, NITI AAYOG

We hope that the government will further reduce this export duty for crust leathers from 20 per cent to nil in future, so as to achieve our objective of enhancing the export of value-added leathers by \$1 billion in the next 2-3 years

RAJENDRA KUMAR JALAN | CHAIRMAN, CLE

Q1 RESULTS

Canara net surges

New Delhi: State-owned Canara Bank Thursday posted a 10 per cent rise in its net profit to ₹3,905 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, on account of reduction in bad loans. The Bangalore-based lender had earned a net profit of ₹3,535 crore in the year-ago period. During the quarter, the bank's total income increased to ₹34,020 crore, as against ₹29,823 crore a year ago, Canara Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest income grew to ₹28,701 crore during the period under review, from ₹25,004 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago.

Nestle net rises 7%

New Delhi: FMCG major Nestle India Ltd Thursday reported an increase of 6.9 per cent in its net profit at ₹746.60 crore for the quarter that ended June 2024. The company had posted a net profit of ₹698.34 crore in the April-June same period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from Nestle India. Nestle India's revenue from the sale of products was up 3.75 per cent to ₹4,792.97 crore in the June quarter. It was at ₹4,619.50 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal. Its total expenses in the June quarter were up 2.7 per cent to ₹3,844.01 crore.

AESL slips into red

New Delhi: Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) Thursday reported a net loss of ₹1,190.66 crore during the June 2024 quarter, mainly on account of increased expenses. It had clocked a net profit of ₹181.98 crore during the April-June period of the preceding 2023-24 fiscal, the company said in a regulatory filing. The company's total income, however, rose to ₹5,489.97 crore from ₹3,772.25 crore in the year-ago period. The company reported profit before tax of ₹1,046.97 crore for the quarter under review against a PBT of ₹496.35 crore in the year ago period.

Tech Mahindra up

Mumbai: IT services company Tech Mahindra Thursday said it has posted a 23 per cent increase in its consolidated profit after tax to ₹851 crore in the June 2024 quarter. During the April-June quarter, the city-headquartered company's revenue declined 1.2 per cent year-on-year to ₹13,005 crore and rose 1 per cent quarter-on-quarter. Its operating profit margins widened 1.90 per cent to 12 per cent.



Customer is king and that is the priority of the ministry. We will do whatever we can to make the air travel affordable

RAM MOHAN NAIDU KINJARAPU | UNION CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

WOMEN-OWNED MSMEs OVER 1.84CR

There are over 1.84 crore women-owned Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the country and the government has taken a number of initiatives to increase the participation of women in the sector, Union Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Jitan Ram Manjhi said Thursday



₹ dips to new all-time low of 83.78 against \$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 25: The rupee dropped by 7 paise to close at an all-time low of 83.78 against the US dollar Thursday, dragged down by month-end dollar demand and foreign fund outflows.

Forex traders said foreign fund outflows from Indian equities following the government's decision to hike the tax rate on capital gains weighed on the local currency.

Analysts said the RBI, which was keeping the rupee steady by two-way support, may allow the rupee to weaken slightly to unwind the slightly real effective exchange rate and keep the currency competitive.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.72 and touched an intra-day high of 83.66 and a low of 83.78 against the dollar during the session.

It finally settled at record closing low level of 83.78 against the American currency, down 7 paise from the previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee closed at 83.71 against the US dollar.

The local unit appreciated slightly during the intra-day trade on supposed intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and overall weakness in crude oil prices, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Forex outflows from Indian equities due to the government's decision to hike the tax rate on capital gains dragged rupee to all time lows, dealers said.

Month-end dollar demand also weighed on the local currency.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 104.17, lower by 0.21 per cent.

BUDGET AFTERMATH

Foreigners sell \$1bn in equities

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS HAVE INVESTED A NET \$5.1BN SO FAR THIS YEAR

REUTERS

Bangalore, July 25: Foreign investors sold nearly \$1 billion worth of Indian equities in the two days since the government raised taxes on derivatives trades and on capital gains from equity investments in its annual budget.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) net sold shares worth ₹81.06 billion (\$968 million) Tuesday and Wednesday, provisional data from the National Stock Exchange showed.

The increase in capital gains tax is clearly a negative even if the increase on long-term gains is moderate. Uncertainty over whether the long-term capital gains tax rate of 12.5% could go up further creates pressure for the market

ASHISH GUPTA | CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICER, AXIS MUTUAL FUND

These investors, anticipating the budget, had bought equities worth a net amount of \$2.20 billion in six sessions before the presentation Tuesday.

They have invested a net \$5.1 billion so far this year.

The increase in capital gains tax is clearly a negative even if the increase on long-term gains is moderate, said Ashish Gupta, chief investment officer at Axis Mutual Fund.

Uncertainty over whether the long-term capital gains tax rate of 12.5% could go up further creates

pressure for the market, he added. "Long term, we do not see much of an impact since the growth story remains intact and companies continue to grow."

India's benchmark index Nifty 50 and Sensex gained about 2% during the pre-budget FPI buying spree. They had risen about 3% between July 11 and July 18, but a 1% drop due to a global cyber outage July 19 trimmed the gains.

Since the budget, the indexes have shed about 1%. Sectors in which FPIs have more holdings - financial services, banks and private banks fell about 3% each.

However, domestic institutional investors have remained buyers, investing a net \$0.55 billion since the budget.

The impact of the tax changes went beyond equities, as the rupee fell to record lows on both the budget day and Wednesday amid a souring sentiment.

Separately, India's markets regulator Wednesday said the number of intraday traders in the equity cash market jumped 300% between fiscal years 2019 and 2023, with seven out of ten traders making losses.

BEFORE BUDGET

FPIs bought equities worth net amount of \$2.20bn in six sessions

Nifty 50, Sensex gained about 2% during the pre-budget FPI buying spree



EQUITIES CONTINUE TO BLEED

In five days, the BSE benchmark has tumbled 1,303.66 points or 1.60%, while the Nifty declined 394.75 points or 1.59%

Mumbai: Equity market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty stayed on the back foot for the fifth straight session Thursday as

investors offloaded metal, banking and finance stocks amid a lacklustre trend in global markets. Heavy foreign fund outflows after a hike in securities transaction tax and short-term capital gains tax also impacted markets' sentiment negatively, traders said. However, strong buying in oil & stocks, energy and auto shares helped the indices offset some losses, they added. After a sharp fall in intra-day trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex managed to recover some of the lost ground to settle 109.08 points or 0.14 per cent lower at 80,039.80, as a sharp rally in Tata Motors and Larsen & Toubro restricted its fall. During the day, it tanked 671 points or 0.83 per cent to 79,477.83. The NSE Nifty dipped 7.40 points or 0.03 per cent to 24,406.10. Intra-day, it tumbled 202.7 points or 0.83 per cent to 24,210.80.

BULLION MARKET SHIFTS

Duty reduction halts silver, platinum imports from UAE

Mumbai: India's silver and platinum imports from the UAE, previously benefiting from concessionary duties under a trade agreement, have ceased as New Delhi's move to reduce import taxes eliminated the duty arbitrage that bullion dealers were exploiting, trade and government officials told Reuters. The world's second-biggest bullion consumer slashed import duties on gold and silver Tuesday to 6% from 15%. After the reduction, there is no incentive to bring silver or platinum into India under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed between India and the UAE, said Prithviraj Kothari, president of the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA). "Now that regular customs duty for silver is lower than the tax under the CEPA, nobody's importing silver anymore." Bullion dealers primarily imported silver from the UAE under the CEPA, as they only needed to pay an 8% import duty compared to the regular 15%. This helped the UAE corner nearly half of India's silver imports, with its shipments surging to 1,998 metric tons in the first five months of 2024 from just 133 tons during the same period a year ago. However, with the regular duty now reduced to 6%, imports via CEPA have become unfeasible, dealers said. In the past two days, bullion dealers have not approached customs to clear silver and platinum shipments under CEPA, said a government official. The imports of platinum have also stopped because of the duty cut, said Nitin Kedia, national general secretary at the All India Jewellers and Goldsmith Federation. India's four-week platinum imports from mid June eclipsed 2023's total as bullion dealers exploited a loophole by registering alloys containing around 90% gold as platinum to avoid higher duties, sources told Reuters.



SNIPPETS

Amazon sees biggest-ever Prime Day

New Delhi: Amazon India -- which hosted the 8th edition of its annual shopping fiesta Prime Day over the last weekend -- Thursday said it has received the highest engagement and recorded a peak of 24,000 orders per minute during the two days, making it the biggest-ever Prime Day in India. The shopping extravaganza witnessed the highest number of Prime members who ever shopped during any Prime Day, it said. "24 per cent more prime members in India shopped vs Prime Day 2023...Prime Day 2024 also witnessed the highest-ever Prime membership signups in the two and half-weeks leading up to Prime Day. Peak of 24,196 orders placed by Prime members in a single minute; Prime members purchased more items than any previous Prime Day shopping event," it said in a statement. More than 65 per cent of small and medium businesses from tier-2 and tier-3 cities received sales during Prime Day 2024, it added.



HMD to make smartphones in India

New Delhi: Finnish mobile devices company HMD will make all its new range of self-branded smartphones in India and aims to export to other parts of the world, a top company official said Thursday. HMD Global founder, Chairman and CEO Jean Francois Baril told PTI in an interview that mobile phones that are being produced in India are very competitive even compared to the best players in China. The company unveiled the HMD Crest brand series smartphones from the company's stable with a 50-megapixel (MP) selfie camera. HMD Global Chief Operating Officer Alain Lejeune said the company has partnered with Dixon Technologies and manufacturing unicorn Zetwerk's Zet Town to produce devices in India.



MAP WAR INTENSIFIES

OLA CABS HAS FULLY EXITED GOOGLE MAPS AND WILL BE USING ITS OWN IN-HOUSE OLA MAPS, LEADING TO LUCRATIVE SAVINGS FOR THE COMPANY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: Amid rising competition from home-grown challenger Ola Maps, Google Thursday announced a slew of new features on Google Maps to woo Indian users, including EV charging station information, flyover callouts and AI-driven routing capability to reduce narrow road usage for four-wheeler drivers.

Google brings new features to woo Indian users

It is "an exciting time in mapping", Google Maps said announcing the new lineup, which comes in the backdrop of a pitched battle with Ola Maps.

Google recently decided to cut the pricing of Google Maps platform for developers by up to 70 per cent from August 1, just weeks after Ola Founder and CEO Bhavish Aggarwal openly nudged Indian developers to shun Google Maps and offered them sweeteners like one-year free access to Ola Maps.

Emphasising its focus on the market, Google Maps Thursday said India is at the centre of its innovation, and that it "can't wait to build the future of Maps right here". India is the first country to get EV charging sta-

tions feature for two-wheelers on Google Maps, and senior company officials said it will look at replicating features like this and others, with tweaks where necessary, for use in other markets, as well.

Replying to a question on the timing of Google Maps' price cuts - coming right after an offensive from Ola - Google Maps senior executives said that while "it's tempting to think that way, but we actually do not focus on competitors".

"We're very focused on making sure we're serving our user base and our partner community, which is our developer partners. And to be honest, we timed it with our IO Connect event in Bangalore," Miriam Daniel, VP



and GM, Google Maps said at a briefing.

Daniel added: "...this is something our partners have been requesting of us for a while, and we've been working on it for quite some time to make sure our infrastructure, our pricing systems are localised and adapted to the needs of our partners in India".

REUTERS

New Delhi, July 25: Ola Electric has suspended its electric car launch plans as the Softbank-backed company wants to focus on its e-scooter business, two people with direct knowledge of the decision said.

Ola's founder Bhavish Aggarwal laid out plans in 2022 to launch an electric sports car with an all-glass roof in two years that could reach 100 km per hour within four seconds.

Aggarwal reiterated those plans as recently as September 2023 in an interview with Forbes, but the two sources said the project is now suspended ahead of its planned August IPO, where it is set to raise around \$660 million. Ola's "focus is all on the two-wheeler market, including bikes, and mass electrification is still some time away - you need to have (charging) infrastructure," the first source told Reuters.

E-scooters have become popular in the country in recent years and infrastructure has been built



THE COMPANY WILL FOCUS ON SCOOTERS, BIKES

SOURCE CITES LACK OF CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE

THE FIRM PLANS THIS YEAR'S BIGGEST IPO IN AUGUST

fast. Around 483,000 e-scooters were sold this year by June, but that period saw only about 45,000 electric car sales in the world's third-biggest auto market.

One of the sources said Ola's car project has been put off for at least two years as focus remains on two-wheeler sales and battery production.

The company's stock market debut next month will be one of India's biggest IPOs this year. Ola, though still loss making,

has gained a 46% market share in e-scooters in the three years since it was founded, even though it slashed its sales goals last year after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government reduced some industry incentives.

Aggarwal already has an e-scooter factory in Tamil Nadu. In 2022 he said he would build a new plant within the same campus with capacity to manufacture 1 million electric cars a year. The cars, he said, would be de-

signed to break the national trend of dull, small or mid-sized vehicles.

Ola deployed external consultants and hired more than 100 employees for the project, the second source said, adding that 30% of the team had now quit and some had been given new roles or projects.

The company had held initial talks with a few auto component suppliers and even built one prototype of the car model, which was designed along the lines of a BMW luxury sedan, at its studio in the United Kingdom, the person added.

The first source said, however, that as and when Ola revives the car project, it will focus on developing an affordable, mass market electric car - a departure from Aggarwal's earlier plans to launch a premium sports car.

The transition to electric vehicles, growing competition from cheaper Chinese rivals and a weakening outlook for sales across major markets are weighing on automakers this year.

tives this week in eight cities - Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Coimbatore, Indore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati, and has promised to bring the feature to iOS and more cities soon.

Another new feature on Google Maps is call-out flyovers along the recommended route. This feature helps users anticipate upcoming flyovers and prepare ahead of time to get onto the flyover.

To ensure EV drivers have the tools they need to confidently hit the road, it has also announced availability of information about EV charging stations on both Google Maps and Google Search in India.

This marks the first time Google is launching EV charging station information for two-wheelers on Google Maps, and India is the first country to get this feature.

India eye double digit tally

Olympic Games begins today with India looking to cross their Tokyo tally of 7 medals



Boxer Nikhat Zareen poses on the Olympic rings at the Games village in Paris. PTI PHOTO

AGENCIES
Paris, July 25: Some would be carrying a huge burden of expectations, some others would look to spring a surprise and a few more would be eyeing the perfect closure to their glittering careers as the 117-strong Indian contingent aim for a better-than-before performance in the Olympic Games, starting here Friday.

India returned from Tokyo with seven medals, and it is only natural that a double digit performance is now desired in the Olympic Games here. However, there is always the question of how the sportspersons in the various disciplines fare on the big day.

Except for wrestlers, who have waded through a highly controversial build-up, athletes in all disciplines have had no complaints about their preparations. Whether it was training abroad or getting the best of facilities to sharpen their skills, there was planning in place.

But will the hard work, the strategies and the unbridled support translate into medals?

It will be a Herculean task to match the Tokyo figures of seven medals, given that except for reigning Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra, not many are top contenders in their respective disciplines.

So far, India have won 35 medals at the Olympics with shooter Abhinav Bindra (2008) and Neeraj Chopra (2021) being the only two individual gold medal winners

More than half of the 117-member contingent is from three sports – athletics (29), shooting (21) and hockey (19). Of these 69 athletes, 40 are debutants.

In other sports too, there are debutants like tennis player N Sriram Balaji and wrestler Reetika Hooda. They are not exactly inexperienced, but largely India's campaign will be driven by the athletes, who will be competing on a stage this grand for the first time.

Then there are the seasoned ones who would be expected to raise their game suitably. Two-time medallist shuttler PV Sindhu, tennis star Rohan Bopanna, legendary table tennis player Sharath Kamal and hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh are certainly participating in their last Olympics.

The hockey team have endured patchy form in the build-up to the Games, the boxers and wrestlers are lacking in real competition time. The shooters too have notched up mixed

results heading into the Olympics.

India's hopes for podium finishes largely hinge on Neeraj, despite concerns around his adductor niggle, and the in-form badminton duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy.

The coveted 90m mark has eluded Neeraj from Tokyo to Paris but the ace javelin thrower seems to be doing just enough, and most importantly, consistently, to land global titles.

Satwik and Chirag have grown into one of India's most formidable men's doubles teams and they are being seen as certain medal winners.

However, India's Chef-de Mission Gagan Narang, himself a bronze winner at the London Games, is highly optimistic that India will achieve a double digit tally. He stated here Thursday that the mindset of the Indian sportspersons gives him hope.

"There is a huge change in the motivation and the level of thinking our athletes have. We used to feel scared, under-confident, however, now that mindset has changed," Narang stated.

"The confidence is at a new high. Today's athletes don't go just to participate, they go to perform. Someone in the top eight or five wants to win a medal today and not just any medal but a gold. That's the difference in thinking of the Indian athletes today," added Narang.

A CHANCE TO BE PART OF

METTLE MEET 2024

OrissaPOST

It's time for METTLE MEET – an initiative by the state's only homegrown English daily to revive quizzing in Odisha. This year, the Preliminaries will take place August 3 and the Grand Finale August 4. Like in previous years, most of the top educational institutions of Odisha – both schools and colleges will be competing for the Grand Prize of ₹1,00,000 in the Junior and Senior segments.

A QUIZ Extravaganza

RULES & REGULATIONS

- Everyone will have to mail their answers to mettlemeet@orissapost.com
- Answers to the questions will follow the next day. The names of the winners will also be announced along with their pictures.
- Answers mailed between 8.00am to 6.00pm each day will be considered valid.
- Orissa POST's decision on all entries will be final. No complaints will be entertained.
- Participants must send their entries with a **passport size photograph, mobile numbers and residential address**. Otherwise the entries will be rejected.
- There can be only one winner from one family.
- Invitation cards to the winners will only be issued on presentation of Valid ID proof – Voter Card, Aadhaar Card, Driving License, Passport, School ID card (In case of students till Class XI)
- No employee of Orissa POST or their family members can be part of the competition

As a reader of Orissa POST, this is a great chance for you to be part of the exciting Grand Finale if you can predict the correct answer. There will be one question on each day for you to answer till July 31, 2024. Every day there will be two winners. If there are more than two correct entries, then the winners will be decided by draw of lots. All the winners will be invited for the Grand Finale which will be conducted by nationally acclaimed quizmaster Ajay Poonia. There will be prizes for the daily winners too. So buckle up your seatbelts and get set for some brainstorming.

TODAY'S QUESTION

With the rise of UPI, frauds have significantly increased and with it the suffering of those who receive money from fraudsters as their bank accounts get frozen. These fraudsters don't use their own accounts, but somebody else's with or without their knowledge. These are called ___ accounts since they are used to launder stolen funds. What animal fills in the blank?

ANSWER TO THURSDAY'S QUESTION

Pingali Venkayya (designed the flag on which the initial Indian National Flag was based)

THE TWO LUCKY WINNERS



TANISHNA BISOI MANORANJAN BEHERA

Others who answered correctly are Sibnanda Dash, Shoumik Jena, Chandrasekhar Sahu, Gayatri Sahu, Abhijit Raychaudhuri, Parsuram Swain, Alok Sahoo, Jitendra Nath Pradhan, Debadata Tripathy, Santanu Kr Nanda, KV Ramana, Sunil Kr Nayak, Omm Swarup Das, Akanksha Pradhan, Ahaana Paikray, Asit Kr Satpathy, Chandrasekhar Patnaik, Abinash Prusty, R Sekhar Rao, Ayushi Pradhan and Prithviraj Padhy

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SHORT TAKES
Bindra honoured

New Delhi: Beijing Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra said that he feels honoured to carry the 2024 Paris Olympic flame and added he is humbled to be part of the sporting pinnacle. Bindra, joined the Paris 2024 Torch Relay event Wednesday and was thrilled to hold the spirit of the Games. "Carrying the Olympic flame yesterday in the Paris 2024 Torch Relay was an honour beyond words. The spirit of the Games lives in each of us, and I am humbled to be part of this incredible journey. Let's continue to inspire, dream, and achieve together! #Paris2024," Bindra posted on 'X'. He also exuded confidence that India will win more than 10 medals.

Tough draw

Paris: India's top singles player Sumit Nagal will begin his Paris Olympics campaign against Frenchman Mouget Corentin, who he had beaten in April and could run into formidable Australian World No. 6 Alex di Minaur in the second round if he wins the opener. Nagal, ranked 80th in the world, shares a 2-2 head-to-head record with Mouget, who is placed 12 places above him in the ATP singles chart. In the men's doubles, Rohan Bopanna and N Sriram Balaji have been drawn to meet the French team of Fabien Reboul and Edouard Roger-Vasselin.

Thushara ruled out

Pallekele: Sri Lanka pacer Nuwan Thushara has been ruled out of the upcoming three-match T20I series against India after breaking a finger during training Wednesday. Although the injury was sustained on his non-bowling arm, it is severe enough to rule him out of the three T20Is, starting here Saturday. Fellow pacer Dilshan Madushanka has been named as replacement. Thushara had been in good form in the T20 World Cup.

Debutant Sukhjeet remains unfazed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 25: Indian hockey forward Sukhjeet Singh is unfazed by the pressure of playing at the highest level and is watching the clips of his international goals to boost his confidence ahead of his debut at the Paris Games.

"I made my debut in the Indian team in 2022 and scored a goal in that match against Spain in the FIH Pro League. The journey so far has been good and I try to do my best in every match," Sukhjeet told this agency Thursday.

Having scored 22 goals in 70 international matches so far, Sukhjeet is prepared physically and mentally to face the pressures of the Olympics. He is one of the five debutants – Sanjay, Abhishek, Rajkumar Pal, and Jarmanpreet Singh – who have joined the 11 members of Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist team for the Paris Games.

"I am not feeling any pres-



SUKHJEET SINGH

sure at all. We have played big tournaments, so we know how to handle pressure. We are confident of playing well against big teams in the pool as our preparation has been really good," said the 27-year-old.

India will begin their campaign July 27 against New

Zealand, followed by matches against Argentina (July 29), Ireland (July 30), Belgium (August 1) and Australia (August 2).

India and Australia have clashed 43 times since 2013, according to data from the FIH. Australia have emerged victorious 33 times, while India have

Players like Sreejesh, Manpreet and Harnampreet constantly share their experiences with me and that motivates me a lot

SUKHJEET SINGH

won eight games and seven matches ended in a draw. India have eight wins, 16 losses and six draws in 30 matches against Tokyo Olympic champions Belgium in the last 10 years. There can be no doubt that India will have to watch out for these two rivals.

Sukhjeet was part of the Indian team that won the gold medal in the Asian Games in Hangzhou. "I watch clips of the games in which I scored before big matches. This increases my confidence and I try to do better in the next match. My previous performance makes me mentally stronger," Sukhjeet said when asked about mental preparations for the Olympics.

MEN, WOMEN ARCHERS ENTER QUARTERFINALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Paris, July 25: Led by the in-form Dhiraj Bommadevara and Ankita Bhakat, India's campaign at the Paris Olympics began on a positive note as the country's archers secured a direct entry into the quarterfinals of both the men's and women's team events after finishing third and fourth respectively in the ranking round here Thursday.

Debutants Dhiraj and Ankita's spectacular show in the qualifications helped India finish in the top four, giving them favourable draws to clinch an elusive Olympic medal in archery. The top four in the team standings directly advance to the quarterfinals, while those ending from fifth to 12th play the round of 16 fixtures.

The Indian men's team are seeded third, which means they will not feature in the same pool as the invincible Koreans in the



ANKITA BHAKAT DHIRAJ BOMMADEVARA

next round. Now, both the Indian teams need just two wins for securing Olympics medals.

Dhiraj finished fourth in the individual round. The duo of Ankita and Dhiraj will be seeded fifth in the mixed team round of 16 event.

The Indian men's team made it to the quarterfinals by finishing with 2013 points. In the women's section the eves finished with 1983 points to finish fourth.

Fan invasion mars game

ARGENTINA SHOCKED BY UNFANCIED MOROCCO IN OLYMPICS FOOTBALL OPENER

AGENCIES

Paris, July 24: A fan invasion in the opening match of the Olympic football tournament between Argentina and Morocco here Wednesday caused chaos, with Argentina eventually beaten 1-2 following a VAR review after play was suspended with the score tied at 2-2.

Argentina's Cristian Medina scored deep in injury time to salvage what looked like a 2-2 draw, but the decision ruling out the goal for offside was delivered about two hours after play was suspended.

After order was restored in



Saint-Etienne and the teams had left the field following the fan

invasion, they discovered that the match had not been completed but suspended by officials. The venue manager said the game had been interrupted and added that a decision about whether the match would be completed was being discussed.

"I don't remember something like this happening at this level, that the match is suspended for an hour-and-a-half, warming up for 10 minutes and then play three," said Argentina manager Javier Mascherano. "What happened on the pitch was a scandal, it's not a neighbourhood tournament, it's the Olympics," he added.

Sindhu gunning for historic 3rd medal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Paris, July 25: From spending time in a hypoxic chamber to sparring with a variety of partners to adapt to different styles, Indian badminton ace PV Sindhu has left no stones unturned to be battle-ready for the Paris Games, where she will be chasing an unprecedented third consecutive Olympic medal.

No Indian player has won three Olympic medals on the trot and a podium finish will make Sindhu arguably India's greatest athlete.

"I am aiming for a medal, definitely, yes. Whether it's one or two or three, it doesn't matter. I've won two medals and I don't want to take pressure by thinking that,

With every opponent, it's a different style and, you need to play the right stroke at the right time and that's what Prakash Sir has taught me

PV SINDHU

"oh, what is the third one," she said Thursday.

"Every time I play Olympics, it's a new beginning for me. So every time I go out there, I want to get a medal and hopefully, I will do that hat-trick soon," the Indian shuttler added.

Before coming here, Sindhu trained at 'Sportcampus Saar' in Saarbrücken, Germany where the altitude, the weather, and the conditions are similar to Paris.

Indian eves start firm favourites

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dambulla, July 25: Shafali Verma will be aiming to come out all guns blazing while Smriti Mandhana will be more than motivated to get a big knock as India start overwhelming favourites against Bangladesh in the semifinal of the women's Asia Cup here Friday.

Shafali however said Thursday that the whole team are looking to improve on their performance against Bangladesh. "It's a nice feeling the way we are winning the matches and gelling well as a team. But the semifinal is very important for us. We are practicing very hard, and hopefully we will execute (plans)," she said.