



## Nora's story

Actor Nora Fatehi says her new song *Nora* represents how Morocco, Canada and India have built her identity

LEISURE | P2



## Nine months of war

Gaza war sparked by Hamas' unprecedented attack on Israel enters its ninth month

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Inflation eases

Retail inflation for industrial workers eased to 3.87 per cent in April compared to 4.2 per cent in March this year

BUSINESS | P11



## Pandya ready

Indian all-rounder Hardik Pandya says he is ready to deliver in the upcoming game against arch-rivals Pakistan

SPORTS | P12

# NEET outrage

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** The 'irregularities' in the results of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) or (NEET-UG) 2024, has triggered unprecedented national outrage, with aspirants and parents gunning for the NTA scalp, while the Congress has demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe accusing the BJP of 'cheating youngsters and playing with their futures.'

The Calcutta High Court too has stepped in while responding to a petition questioning the alleged irregularities in the very conduct of the test and asked the examiners, the National Testing Agency (NTA), to file its response at the earliest.

The results declared hastily June 4, instead of the earlier announced date of June 14, took all by surprise as 67 candidates achieved All India Rank 1.

Moreover, a significant number of students scored full marks (720). This led to allegations of a NEET paper leak scam. Scorecards of candidates with 718 or 719 marks also began to surface.

This raised questions about the scoring process of the test, as its marking scheme awards four marks for each correct answer and deducts one mark for an incorrect one. Therefore, after the full score of 720, the next possible score should be 716 if one question is left unanswered, and 715 if one question is answered incorrectly.

Adding fuel to the controversy, the NEET merit list showed that eight students from the same centre in Haryana scored perfect 720. Moreover, seven of the eight toppers from the centre only have their first name, further raising doubts over the credibility of the list.

The NTA in its defence said in a statement that the marks given

to some students were 'grace marks' after they raised concerns about insufficient time during the exam. It claimed it was based on the normalisation formula which had been devised and adopted by the Supreme Court to address the loss of time faced by the candidates. "The loss of examination time was ascertained and such candidates were compensated with grace marks. So, candidate's marks can be 718 or 719 also," the NTA explained. The clarification has been contested by many asking how much grace marks were given and to what number of students it was given to.

Not just the results, but the very exam this year raised many eyebrows following the disclosure of a paper leak scam in Bihar. As many as 13 persons, including four examinees and their family members, were arrested for their alleged involvement in the scam.

Meanwhile, calling it a 'scam' the Congress Friday demanded a high-level investigation under the Supreme Court's supervision and accused the BJP of 'cheating youngsters and playing with their futures'.

Party chief Mallikarjun Kharge said paper leaks, rigging and corruption

have become an integral part of many examinations, including the NEET. "The Modi government is directly responsible for this," he said in a post on X.

The party also questioned the timing of the release of the results. "The question is how did the students get cheated, who did it and why was this result deliberately declared June 4 amid the noise of election results, whereas it was to be declared June 14?" Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked.

**Students, parents, docs slam NEET rig** | P3

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Want to be a minister? What are you doing here? You should be queuing either in Patna or Amaravati

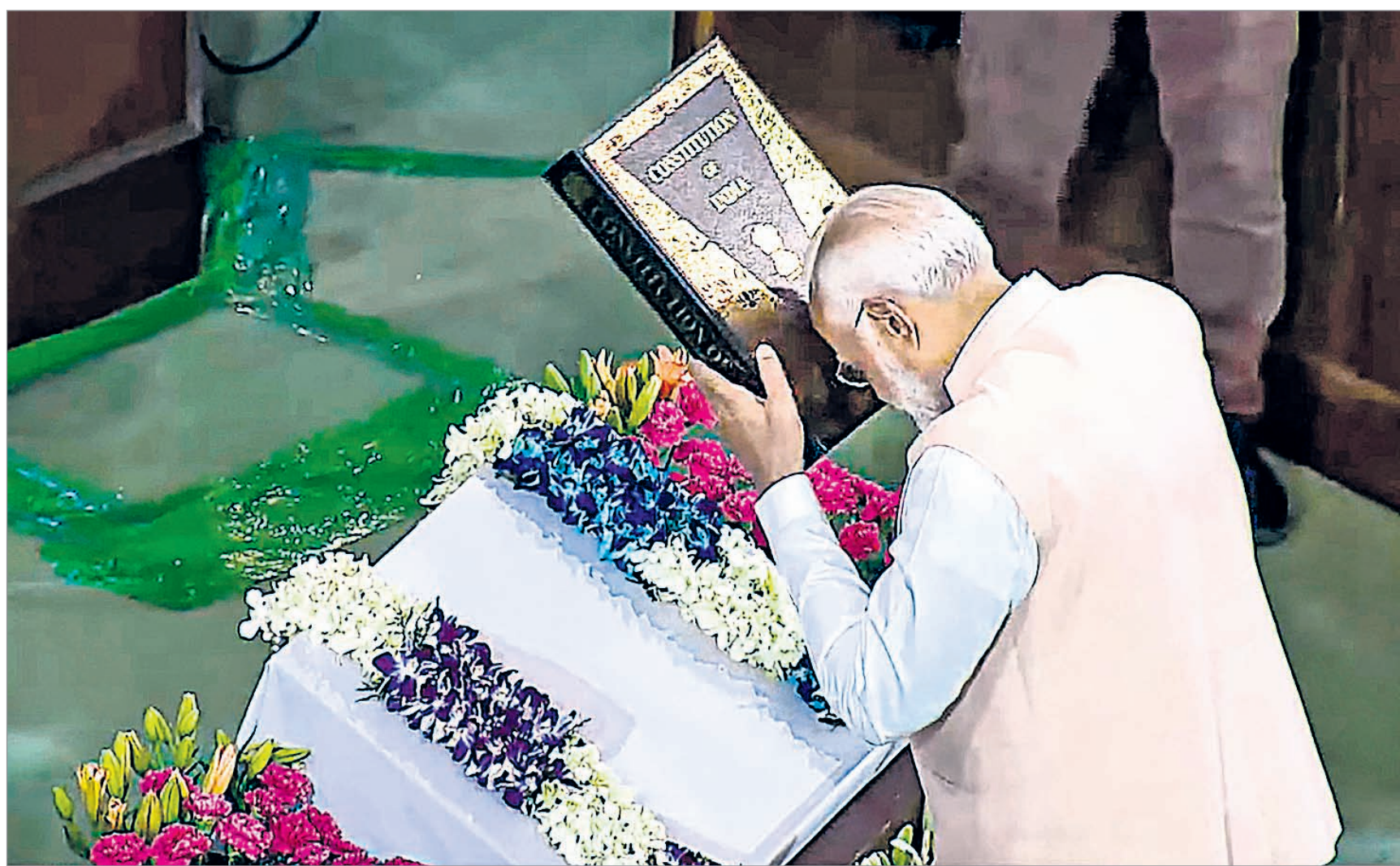
## MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	76693.36	↑ 1618.85
NIFTY	23290.15	↑ 468.75
DOLLAR	83.49	↑ ₹0.02
EURO	90.27	↓ ₹0.62
GOLD	₹71,550	↓ ₹1581
SILVER	₹89,870	↓ ₹3946

## WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	37.6°C	37.5°C
Min Temp	28.6°C	27.5°C
Humidity	71%	76%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST  
PARTLY CLOUDY SKY



THIRD INNINGS: Senior BJP leader Narendra Modi upon his arrival to attend the NDA Parliamentary Party meeting at Samvidhan Sadan in New Delhi, Friday

PTI PHOTO

# Prez appoints Modi as PM-designate

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 7:** President Droupadi Murmu Friday appointed NDA Parliamentary Party leader Narendra Modi as Prime Minister-designate and the new government will take oath Sunday evening.

Murmu handed over the letter of appointment to Modi, who called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here Friday evening.

Earlier, leaders of the BJP-led NDA had called on Murmu and handed over letters of support for Modi, who was elected as the leader of the NDA Parliamentary Party.

Addressing the media in the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Modi said he has been appointed as Prime Minister-designate by the President.

"The President has asked me to work as the PM-designate and she has informed me about the

oath ceremony," Modi said and added that he has informed the President that they will be comfortable if the event is held on the evening of June 9.

He said the Rashtrapati Bhavan will work out the details of the oath-taking ceremony Sunday by when he would

hand over the list of the Council of Ministers to the President.

"This 18th Lok Sabha is an important milestone towards fulfilling those dreams when the country will celebrate the 100 years of independence in 2047," Modi said.

This 18th Lok Sabha is a House of new energy, youthful energy, and people have given the NDA government one more chance, Modi said.

Modi said he would strive to ensure unanimity in running the next government and asserted that the NDA is not a com-

bine of some parties to get power but an organic alliance committed to the principle of 'nation first'.

Modi said the ruling combine is committed to the constitutional principle of 'sarva panth sambhava (interfaith harmony)' and mutual trust was at the core of this bloc.

"If we look at numbers, then this is the strongest coalition government in the history of coalitions," he said, asserting that the NDA has been the most successful pre-poll alliance since its existence for nearly 30 years, out of which it has served out three full terms and is set to start the fourth.

## SHORT TAKES

### 1st session of 18th LS likely from June 15

**New Delhi:** The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha is likely to begin around June 15, sources said Friday. The first session will commence in the third week of June with the oath-taking by the newly-elected candidates as members of the House, the sources said, adding the oath-taking is likely to continue for two days, following which a new Speaker will be elected. The next day, the president will address a joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, thus formally inaugurating the session, the sources added.

### RBI keeps interest rates unchanged

**Mumbai:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) left its key interest rates unchanged Friday as expected, keeping the focus on inflation amid robust economic growth that is likely to provide the new Modi government headroom for manoeuvring reforms. The Monetary Policy Committee, consisting of three RBI and an equal number of external members, kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent for an eighth straight policy meeting and stuck to its relatively hawkish stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation', Governor Shaktikanta Das said.

### 4 Indian students drown in Russia

**New Delhi:** Four Indian students, who were studying at a university in Russia's Veliky Novgorod region, drowned in the Volkhov river, the Ministry of External Affairs said Friday. A fifth Indian student was saved from drowning and is currently receiving medical attention, it said, adding two students are missing and search for them continues. Emergency services have so far recovered two bodies from the Volkhov river.

### Tejas Rajdhani coach derails

**New Delhi:** A coach of the New Delhi-Bhubaneswar Tejas Rajdhani Express derailed at Ghaziabad station around 9:35 am Friday, the Northern Railway said. No passenger was hurt as the train was moving at a 'very slow speed', Chief PRO, Northern Railway, Deepak Kumar said. "After the coach was isolated from the train and passengers were accommodated in another coach, it departed from Ghaziabad and reached the New Delhi Railway Station safely," he said.

# 73% of new MLAs 'crorepatis'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** Seventy-three per cent of the newly elected MLAs in Odisha are 'crorepatis' with BJD's Sanatan Mahakud the richest legislator, a report said.

The Odisha Assembly has 147 members. Odisha Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) have analysed the self-sworn affidavits of all 147 elected MLA candidates and found that 73 per cent of the newly elected MLAs in 2024 are 'crorepatis' while 95 (65 per cent) 'crorepatis' MLAs were elected in 2019 polls. Out of 107 crorepati MLAs, 52 candidates are from

BJP, 43 from BJD, nine from Congress, one from CPI (M) and two Independent candidates.

The BJP won 78 Assembly seats while BJD secured 51, Congress 14, three Independent nominees emerged victorious and CPI (M) won one seat in the 2024 Assembly polls. Out of the 147 winning candidates, 85 candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves, which includes 67 candidates who are facing serious criminal cases.

As per the report, 46 out of 78 winning MLA candidates from BJP and 12 out of 51 winning MLA candidates from BJD have declared that they are facing serious criminal cases against

themselves in their affidavits.

Similarly, five out of 14 winning Assembly candidates from Congress, one of CPI (M) and three Independent winning candidates are also facing serious criminal cases, it said. The average assets per winning candidate in the Odisha Assembly elections is ₹7.37 crore while it was ₹4.41 crore in the 2019 Assembly elections.

Among the winning candidates, Champua MLA Sanatan Mahakud (BJD) is the richest with total assets of ₹227.67 crore. BJD's Subasini Jena, who won the election from Balasore, is the second richest MLA with total assets of ₹135.17 crore.

# 11 tonnes of waste removed from Everest

AGENCIES

**Kathmandu, June 7:** The Nepali Army has removed the remains of five climbers and 11 tonnes of waste from the high-altitude Everest region.

The rubbish and bodies scattered across the Everest, Nuptse, and Lhotse mountains were recovered by the troops after a grueling 55-day effort. It is estimated that over 50 tonnes of waste and more than 200 bodies have tarnished the majestic Everest. In response to concerns about overcrowding and dangerous conditions, the Army initiated an annual clean-up of the mountain



in 2019, dubbing it the world's highest garbage dump. Over the course of five clean-ups, the Army has successfully gathered 119 tonnes of rubbish, 14 human

corpses and various skeletons. To address the issue further, authorities have implemented measures to reduce rubbish and enhance rescue operations.

Climbers are now required to wear tracking devices and are responsible for carrying back their own waste.

Looking ahead, the government plans to establish a team of mountain rangers dedicated to monitoring rubbish and allocate additional funds for its collection, Rakesh Gurung, Director of Mountaineering at Nepal's Department of Tourism, told the BBC.

For the spring climbing season that ended in May, the government issued permits to 421 climbers, down from a record-breaking 478 last year. Those numbers do not include Nepalese

guides. In total, an estimated 600 people climbed the mountain this year.

This year, eight climbers died or went missing, compared to 19 last year.

Daniel Paterson, a British national, and his Nepalese guide, Pastenji Sherpa, are currently missing after being struck by falling ice May 21. Paterson's family initiated a fundraising campaign to finance a search team to locate them.

However, an update provided June 4 stated that due to the location and hazardous conditions of the operation, recovery efforts are currently not feasible.

# leisure



## DOLLY PARTON OPENS UP ON RETIREMENT

Country music icon Dolly Parton shared that one of the few things that would make retire would be if her husband needed her "I've always said that if my husband was in ill health or needed me, I would most definitely pull way back," Parton told Entertainment Tonight.

## ANISTON NEVER IMAGINED FRIENDS WOULD BE SUCH A HUGE SUCCESS

Hollywood star Jennifer Aniston, who found international fame as Rachel Green in *Friends*, said that she never thought the sitcom would become such a huge success and still be popular 30 years on from its debut.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, you may get to share your ideas and opinions with like-minded people. Ganesha says you may finally have a heart-to-heart chat with your beloved, and express your deep commitment. You may even talk of your long cherished dreams.

**TAURUS**  
Logic may be your forte today, but in the game of life, sometimes the heart wins and sometimes the head. Your analytical skills will help you understand things better, in turn, making you wiser. You may feel an urge to spend on music cassettes, CDs and electronic gadgets.

**GEMINI**  
You will witness a marked improvement in your emotional quotient, says Ganesha. This change may either come through watching a film, listening to a song or just a simple insight. At the workplace, people will be lavishing praise on you for your excellent performance.

**CANCER**  
Ganesha believes that today you may have to take certain financial decisions at home as well as at work. If you are in-charge of a certain project, you will trust the judgement of those working on it, mostly because they have been hand-picked by you.

**LEO**  
It may be that the best daffodils bloom early in the morning, but good ideas can come any time of the day, says Ganesha. So spruce up your management skills, as you shall need them to help organise and cash in on the multitude of ideas that will bombard you today.

**VIRGO**  
A la Sisyphus, you may realise the futility of your efforts and constant failure in achieving success. But do not despair, says Ganesha. Recharge your imagination, inquisitiveness and intelligence and focus on your long-term goals, says Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
Some days you get the carrot, while on others, it is the stick! Today is going to be one of those 'stick' days when it comes to dealing with your seniors, foresees Ganesha. It would be wise to delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Sometimes, waiting patiently is the best policy, especially if you are a job aspirant. Do not expect immediate success.

**SCORPIO**  
There is a big black hole in your pocket, and it's high time you looked for remedies there. Loved ones will make use of your money as suntan cream - liberally and carelessly. You are most likely to burn the holes larger by spending lavishly, especially to impress a member of the opposite sex.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Get ready to rule hearts today. Your thoughtful insights into other people's psyche might just help you write a book on it! In the battleground of love, you will win over your sweetheart all over again, probably with a nice, slow dance coupled with a fantastic candlelit dinner.

**CAPRICORN**  
Work will suck you dry of your energy today, says Ganesha. Business rivals will go out of their way to mar your reputation and project you as incompetent. But to their dismay, you will prove to be way too smart to let them succeed in their sinister motives. In fact, you will hit where it hurts most and show your foes that you have all it takes to be a winner. Your superiority will reign over theirs.

**AQUARIUS**  
You get a pat on the back due to your brilliant academic standing. People will admire your business acumen and may imitate your choices. But this doesn't mean you become haughty and unapproachable.

**PISCES**  
Anticipation is all the fun. Sadly, this only alludes to your months-in-preparation travel plans that are most likely to be delayed today on one count or the other. Though, if this is any consolation, your trip, when it finally occurs, will bring you as much pleasure and satisfaction that you expected out of it, if not more, says Ganesha.

## NORA ON HOW 3 NATIONS BUILT HER IDENTITY

**Mumbai:** Actress and dancing diva Nora Fatehi, who has recently dropped her latest song named after her, says it represents how Morocco, Canada and India have built her identity.

"Creating *Nora* has been an incredible journey for me," Nora said. For Nora, the actress-dancer blended her Moroccan, Canadian, and Indian

roots into a symphony. The beats of Moroccan rhythms mixed with the energetic pulses of contemporary music. The lyrics are in English and Darija (Moroccan Arabic).

She added, "The song represents how Morocco, Canada, and India have built my identity, and it is my way of sharing my heritage and personal success story with the world. I hope it inspires everyone to embrace their unique identities, celebrate their diversity, and find joy in their cultural backgrounds."

Nora, who is of Moroccan descent, was born in Canada. She made her way into India in 2014 with the maiden film *Roar: Tigers of the Sundarbans*.

Over the years, she gained the spotlight with her dancing prowess in tracks such as *Dilbar*, *O Saki Saki*, *Jehda Nasha* and *Manike* to name a few. She was last seen acting in films such as *Crakk* and *Madgaon Express*.

## Taapsee shares her relationship journey

**Mumbai:** Taapsee Pannu and her longtime boyfriend and badminton player Mathias Boe married in Udaipur in March. In a recent interview with *Cosmopolitan India*, the star discussed her relationship with Mathias, revealing that it was not 'love at first sight' for her. Instead, she took her time in the relationship to determine if it was a good fit for them both.

In the interview, Taapsee said that she has a soft spot for athletes and added, "It was not like a love-at-first-sight situation, for me at least—I took time to test if it's really practical...the feasibility of the relationship was important for me. I was obviously fond of him and respected him, and we kept meeting and I grew to love him. So, falling in love didn't happen in a month or instantly. It is a fact though which I keep repeating in most interviews about him—when I met him I felt like I met a man."

She added, "I had dated so many boys before him, and suddenly, I met a guy who didn't feel like anyone I'd been with before. So, there's this sudden sense of security and maturity, which was so evident that I felt like 'okay, you've finally found the man.'"

AGENCIES



## 'Social media is a bane and a boon'

**Mumbai:** Actress Sumbul Touqeer shared that she does not believe in focusing on the number of social media followers, saying she keeps telling herself that it cannot let her take her craft of acting lightly.

Sumbul, who is currently seen in *Kavya - Ek Jazbaa, Ek Junoon*, feels it is not healthy for anyone to keep a tab on social media followers. "I know that a strong social media following represents popularity, and I do sometimes get flattered by it, but I keep telling myself it cannot let me take my craft of acting lightly. So, I don't get swayed by it," shared Sumbul, who has 1.6

### BHUBANESWAR FILM FESTIVAL - DAY 1

## Ketan Mehta: We must not stop celebrating cinema



**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** The Bhubaneswar Film Festival (BFF), a three day event organised by the Bhubaneswar Film Circle to celebrate classic Odia movies, got underway here at Soochana Bhawan, Friday.

Four movies - *Maya Miriga*, *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, *Bhija Matira Swarga*, *Hello Arsi* and a documentary film on acclaimed animator and director Pramod Pati were screened during the day, keeping the viewers in thrall.

Released in 1984, Nirad Mohapatra's *Maya Miriga* is about a family, where three generations share certain emotional bonds that make up a way of life but painfully realise that they cannot last.

Directed and produced by Parbati Ghose, *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, a 1986 film, is based on Fakir Mohan Senapati's classic of the same name. The film is the story of an innocent weaver couple and a cruel zamindar.

Set in the heartland of rural Odisha, nationally acclaimed director Manmohan Mohapatra's

*Bhija Matira Swarga* unravels the story of hope, despair, attitudes and motivations of humans.

Sambit Mohanty's *Hello Arsi*, released in 2018, won the Best Feature Film in Odia award at the 65th National Film Awards.

A documentary film based on the life of well known documentary film director and animator Pramod Pati (1932-1975) was also screened.

Among the luminaries, eminent filmmakers Ketan Mehta, Prasant Nanda, A K Bir, Deepa Sahi, and National School of Drama director Chittaranjan Tripathy were present on the first day of the event.

"We've been discussing the importance of culture, and cinema as undeniably the most powerful tool humans have ever created to express. Cinema is a medium that allows us to showcase the very best of our cultural heritage, and that's something we must not stop celebrating," said Mehta, the chief guest of the evening.

million followers on Instagram.

She went on to say, "I don't think actors should get influenced by such things. I feel that the day I start getting affected by social media numbers, it will be the end of me. For me, what also matters is the loyal fan-base. I am glad that I have one."

The *Bigg Boss 16* fame says social media can be an asset if one knows how to take it positively and not focus on the negatives.

"Social media is a bane and a boon, depending on how you decide to use it. Social media helps me reach more people, interact with my fans, and get more real-time feedback on my work, but that is it. I try not to let it affect me," added the actress.

AGENCIES



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

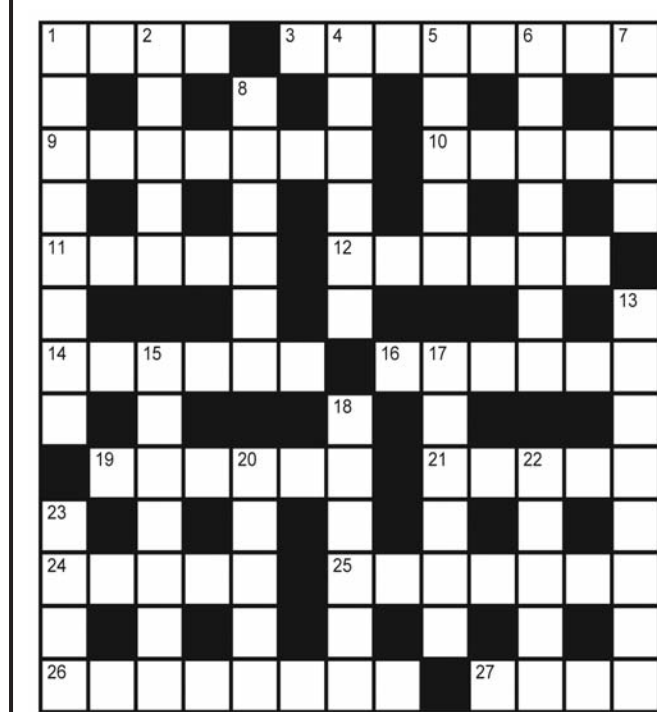


### BREVITY



### FUN post

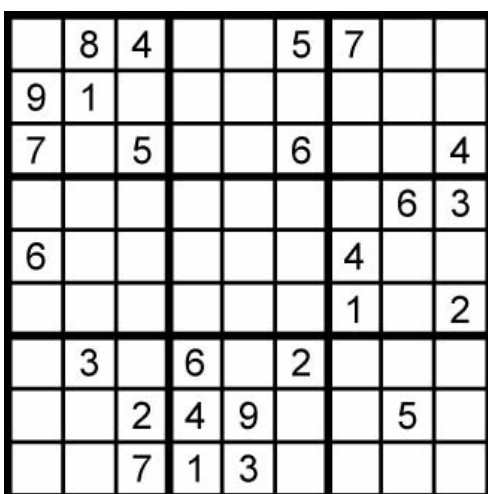
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Docile
  - 3 Insurrection
  - 9 Specialty spectacles
  - 10 Dutch cheese
  - 11 Dairy product
  - 12 Lengthen
  - 14 Sour
  - 16 Razor fish
  - 19 Asian skill
  - 21 Dresser
  - 24 Combine
  - 25 Foreign domestics (2,5)
  - 26 Rest period
  - 27 Fixed charges
  - 6 Large lizards
  - 7 Happy
  - 8 Graduates
  - 13 Medical practitioners
  - 15 Picture
  - 17 Formula
  - 18 Encroach upon
  - 20 Ruffle
  - 22 First-class
  - 23 Gardener's purchase
- Down**
- 1 Illusionist
  - 2 Double birdie
  - 4 Delicate and pale in color
  - 5 Metal bar

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Dignitaries unveil a booklet at an event organised to mark the birth anniversary of Guru Dayanidhi Das at Kala Vikas Kendra in Cuttack, Friday

# downtown

# Students, parents, docs slam NEET irregularities

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test - Undergraduate (NEET-UG), conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA), has come under severe criticisms over the 'irregularities' in the results that were declared June 4.

Several aspirants of the medical entrance test have alleged of inflated marks which led to a record 67 candidates bagging the top rank, including eight from one exam centre.

The NTA, however, denied any irregularities and said the changes made in the NCERT textbooks and grace marks for losing time at the examination centres are some of the reasons behind the students scoring higher marks.

A cursory glance at the toppers' scores in previous years reveals that in 2021, three students got the perfect score of 720/720. In 2022, not a single student got the perfect score. The highest was 715 and four students got it. In 2023, two students got the perfect score. However, this year, a whopping 67 students got 720/720.

What raised eyebrows was the fact that a few students have scored 718 or 719 out of the total 720. This looks well nigh impossible as the marking pattern for the exam is four marks for each question and one mark is deducted for every wrong answer (negative marking). The candidates urged clarification regarding the matter.

However, students, parents, doctors and educationist **Orissa POST** spoke to are not satisfied over the clarifications made by the NTA that it received representations and court cases from candidates raising concerns about loss of time during the exam, and, therefore, such candidates were compensated with grace marks.

**Mihir Ranjan Nayak**, professor of Psychiatry at the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, whose son Arjya



Pratyush Nayak appeared for the test, said even top rankers will not get top seats in premier medical institutions because of lack of adequate seats with such scores. "Then what is the point scoring good marks," he asked.

Also, he said, the 'advance' declaration of the results—June 4, instead of the scheduled June 14—without any notice also raises a lot of questions. He said the conduct of the test in online mode should be promoted so as to ensure more clarity.

**Suprit Mishra**, a NEET aspirant from the state who scored 690 marks, said the irregularities have hampered his chances of getting admission in any good institution despite working hard for two years in preparing for the test. "I hoped of studying in AIIMS-

Bhubaneswar, but my chances of getting a seat appears a distant dream now. Awarding grace

marks in this exam is unacceptable. They should have been given grace time, and not grace mark," he added.

Another aspirant, **Pritam Patra**, who scored 715 marks, said the grace mark issue will certainly be a worrying factor for students who missed the chance to get admission by a whisker. "Although I am not demanding a re-examination, but matching action should be taken against those who obtained grace marks, or they should be subjected to some specific examination," he said.

"I want the NEET to re-check the ranks and deal with the controversies surrounding grace marks," said **Rounak Mallick** who scored 695 marks in NEET.

**Subasish Behera**, a dentist and health expert, said NEET being the gateway for admission into medical and dental

courses, it is necessary that the selection process be modified.

"Proper rules and systems should be formulated and put in place as meritorious students should get seats, rather than the non-meritorious ones. We are looking at the future doctors of a new India. If colleges get average students, the quality of doctors would also be of average. For me, quality is more important than quantity," he added.

**Amrit Pattajoshi**, a medical practitioner, said exams should be skilled-based, and not of multiple choice question (MCQ) pattern. "We come across a lot of students who know how to do MCQ. But when they join colleges, they neither have the motivation, nor do they have the temperament to follow it up. Students should also undergo mandatory internship for a couple of months at a medical set up before they are deemed eligible to sit for medical exams," he said.

**Subhansu Dash**, a college student, said, "This entire NTA with the NEET (UG) test is a total mess! No wonder students everywhere are angry over cutting grace marks and inflating scores. This feels like such an unfair disadvantage. I can feel what the students are going through. I stand with them in this fight against this terrible decision," he said.

"This is a direct gamble with the future of lakhs of candidates of the country, which should be immediately investigated at the high level under the supervision of the Supreme Court," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

"This year, there was news of a paper leak in it that was suppressed. Now, many candidates have alleged that the marks of the students have been increased. Students say that this time a record 67 candidates have secured the top rank and six of these candidates are said to be from the same examination centre," he claimed.

The question is how did the students get cheated, who did it and why was this result deliberately declared June 4 amid the noise of election results, whereas it was to be declared June 14?

The NTA issued a clarification after uproar over the results, he said and added that the affected students have termed this explanation 'superficial' and 'unreliable'.

"In such a situation, it is very important to restore the faith of students in the purity of this examination, which is possible only through a fair and transparent investigation," Ramesh said.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also slammed the Narendra Modi government over the alleged irregularities and called for a resolution of the students' 'legitimate complaints' through an investigation.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "First the NEET exam paper was leaked and now the students allege that there has been a scam in its results as well. Serious questions are being raised on six students of the same centre getting 720 out of 720 marks and many kinds of irregularities are coming to the fore."

"Why is the government ignoring the voice of lakhs of students? Students want answers to legitimate questions related to the rigging in the NEET exam results," the Congress general secretary said.

## Cong for SC-monitored probe

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 7:** The Congress Friday demanded a high-level investigation under the Supreme Court's supervision into 'irregularities' in NEET and accused the BJP of cheating youngsters and playing with their futures.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said paper leaks, rigging and corruption have become an integral part of many examinations, including the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

"The Modi government is directly responsible for this. For the candidates appearing in recruitment exams, then facing several irregularities, getting caught in the labyrinth of paper leaks, is playing with their futures. The BJP has cheated the youth of the country," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

"We demand that a high-level investigation should be conducted under the supervision of the Supreme Court so that our talented students appearing in NEET and other exams get justice," he added.

Jairam Ramesh, the Congress general secretary in charge of communications, said the 'scam' involving lakhs of candidates is 'completely unacceptable and unforgivable'.

"This is a direct gamble with the future of lakhs of candidates of the country, which should be immediately investigated at the high level under the supervision of the Supreme Court," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

"This year, there was news of a paper leak in it that was suppressed. Now, many candidates have alleged that the marks of the students have been increased. Students say that this time a record 67 candidates have secured the top rank and six of these candidates are said to be from the same examination centre," he claimed.

The question is how did the students get cheated, who did it and why was this result deliberately declared June 4 amid the noise of election results, whereas it was to be declared June 14?

**JAIRAM RAMESH** | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

The NEET (UG) results were declared Tuesday.

"The question is how did the students get cheated, who did it and why was this result deliberately declared June 4 amid the noise of election results, whereas it was to be declared June 14?" Ramesh asked.

He further said, "Several questions are being raised on the results of NEET -- How did 67 toppers simultaneously get 720/720 marks? How did eight students from the same centre get 720/720 marks? Every question was worth four marks, then how did the numbers 718-719 come? 67 students getting 720 out of 720 marks in the results released after the NEET question paper was leaked raises serious suspicion."

The NTA issued a clarification

## Calcutta HC seeks NTA response

**KOLKATA:** The Calcutta High Court has ordered the National Testing Agency (NTA) to file an affidavit within 10 days in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) alleging irregularities in the NEET (UG) 2024. A division bench of Justice Apurba Sinha Ray also asked the NTA to disclose in its affidavit as to how the reservation policy of the state as well as the Central government has been followed in preparing the merit list. The bench, also comprising Justice Kausik Chanda, took note of the submission that some of the candidates could not have scored 718 or 719 as per the applicable marking system. Posting the matter for further hearing after two weeks, the HC ordered the NTA to preserve the records pertaining to the NEET (UG) 2024 until further orders. The PIL filed by advocate Tanmoy Chattopadhyay, in his personal capacity, said that there were 'glaring discrepancies' in NEET (UG) results published June 4 and the students community at large is today at the risk of being deprived of their legitimate claim to admission. The plea said that NTA sought to justify the illegalities by giving grace marks to certain candidates who made representations regarding loss of time during the conduct of examination based on a 2013 judgment of the Supreme Court which has got 'no relation whatsoever with the case at hand and it was in respect of a fact situation in CLAT 2018 and the said judgment has no relevance in respect of the NEET (UG) 2024'.

## Priest held for bike lifting; 24 two-wheelers recovered



DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** The twin city Commissionerate Police arrested a priest on charges of bike lifting after recovering 24 stolen two-wheelers from his possession, Friday.

The accused - Krupasindhu Mohapatra, 54, of Janla area -

performed rituals at a temple near his residence in the morning hours and stole two-wheelers later in the day, Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda told mediapersons here.

About the crackdown, the top cop said they zeroed in on Mohapatra while probing a bike lifting incident under Capital

police limits here April 6. "Niranjan Singh, a resident under Capital police limits here, approached us April 6 alleging that his bike was stolen from the parking lot of Capital Hospital around 4:30 pm when he went to visit a relative at the facility," Panda said.

While examining the footages of CCTVs installed in the locality, police found Mohapatra fleeing with Singh's two-wheeler, he said.

Preliminary investigations revealed Mohapatra targeted parking lots in the City. "He stole two-wheelers mostly from parking lots of AIIMS, Apollo Hospitals, Kalinga Hospitals and BMC Mall, and sold those to prospective buyers," Panda said, adding that Mohapatra had been arrested by the Capital police for a petty crime a month back.

The accused has been booked under Sections 379 and 413 of the IPC, the top cop said.



AT LORD'S SERVICE: Servitors shifting a newly-built chariot wheel at Rath Yard in Puri, Friday

PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

## Aggression, confusion may signal brain tumour risk

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, June 7:** Erratic mental health symptoms like aggression, confusion, altered behaviour, and persistent headaches may indicate the potential risk of a brain tumour, said experts Friday, ahead of Brain Tumour Day.

Brain Tumour Day is observed every year June 8 to raise awareness about the debilitating disease that can make it hard for people to learn, plan, make decisions, concentrate, and make decisions. Brain tumours are abnormal uncontrolled growth of cells in the brain. They can be malignant or non-malignant.

### BRAIN TUMOUR DAY

"Brain tumours frequently mirror psychiatric symptoms, presenting as aggression, confusion, altered behaviour, irrelevant speech due to comprehension impairment, apathy, emotional instability, or disorientation," Dr K Chandrasekar, Senior Consultant Neurosurgeon, Apollo Cancer Institutes, said.

The complexity of these symptoms underlines the deceptive nature of such serious mental conditions as potential indicators of a brain tumour.

Kersi Chavda, Consultant Psychiatry, P.D. Hinduja Hospital

& Medical Research Centre, Mahim said that very often the signs and symptoms of a brain tumour mimic a mental illness.

"Memory problems like difficulty with short-term memory and forming new memories; changes in behaviour or personality; difficulty understanding or producing speech; vision problems; persistent headaches; and loss of coordination and balance are some of the symptoms of brain tumour that mimic psychiatric issues," he added.

Ashish Srivastava, Head of Neurosurgery at Dharamshila

Narayana Hospital, said often people do not pay attention to these symptoms of brain tumours, which can lead to severe consequences later.

"Be alert about the changes happening in your body. Gradually increasing headaches, frequent sleep, difficulty in thinking and understanding, blurred vision, difficulty seeing distant objects, feeling sluggish and tired, and problems in performing daily tasks are symptoms that point towards a brain tumour," he warned.

Other common symptoms include vomiting, nausea, paralysis, vision loss, and walking difficulties.

## Respite for Jagadev in EVM damage case

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** A local court Friday granted interim bail to Khurda MLA-elect Prasanta Jagadev, who was in a jail after being arrested on the charge of damaging an EVM during voting May 25.

Jagadev has been granted bail for three days - June 9, 10 and 11 - and asked to surrender before the court June 12.

"We had sought bail for a month for his swearing-in June 10, besides death of his nephew. But the Khurda district court granted him bail for only three days," Jagadev's lawyer Prabhat Dash told reporters.

We had sought bail for a month for his swearing-in ceremony June 10, besides death of his nephew. But the Khurda district court granted him bail for only three days

**PRABHAT DASH** | JAGADEV'S LAWYER

Dash said his client would move Orissa High Court for extension of the bail period and for grant of regular bail.

Jagadev was arrested May 26 for allegedly damaging an electronic voting machine (EVM)

and manhandling two polling personnel at a booth in Kaurmpatana village in Begunia Assembly constituency in Khurda while polling was underway during the third phase of elections May 25.

Jagadev, who contested from Khurda, is a registered voter of Begunia seat.

He has been booked under several sections of the Representation of People's Act, besides Sections 294 (use of abusive, humiliating or defamatory words), 506 (criminal intimidation), and 354 (assault on criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the Indian Penal Code.

# 85 newly-elected MLAs have criminal cases



**AGENCIES**  
**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** As many as 85 candidates elected to the state Assembly in 2024 elections, have declared criminal cases pending against them, according to the Odisha Election Watch report.

The report, released to the press here Friday, stated that 58 per cent of the winning candidates have criminal cases against them. In 2019 elections, out of 146 MLAs, 67 MLAs, constituting 46 per cent, had declared criminal cases against them.

having serious criminal cases has also gone up from 21 per cent in 2009 to 28 per cent in 2014, which further went up to 34 per cent in 2019 and 47 per cent in 2024. The report said, party-wise, out of 78 newly-elected BJP MLAs, 46 (59 per cent) have criminal cases pending against them. While from 51 BJD MLAs elected in 2024, 15 (29 per cent) have criminal cases pending against them, 11 of the 14 elected Congress MLAs have criminal cases.

# Two held for pelting stones at running train

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF) Khurda Road has apprehended two persons for their alleged involvement in a stone pelting incident, targeting Kamakhya-Bengaluru Express (12552) near Nirakarapur June 6.

Upon receiving reports of stone pelting from the passengers and later coordinating with the Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) who pointed out the exact location between Golabai and Nirakarapur Railway Station, RPF Khurda Road initiated a thorough investigation.

A team of RPF proceeded to the area and nabbed two persons, later identified as Ramesh Majhi, 38, of Golabai village and Sadasib Pradhan, 33, of Nakula Patna village under Jankia police station. The accused were found in an inebriated state near the railway track, and upon questioning, they confessed about their involvement in the reckless act.

Citing the act as breach in the safety and security of railway passengers and personnel, the RPF registered a case (No-C3C/944/24, dated June 7, 2024), against the accused, invoking sections 153, 147, and 145(b) of the Railway Act.



AT LORD'S ABODE: Governor Raghubar Das and his spouse Rukmini Devi visit Srimandir in Puri, Friday

# Decision on CM today

**BHUBANESWAR:** The decision on the new Chief Minister of the state will be taken at the meeting of the BJP Legislature Party in the Capital City, Saturday. The meeting will have the presence of all newly-elected MLAs of the saffron party. "The MLAs of the party will choose the next Chief Minister of Odisha in consonance with the recommendation of the Central leadership," sources said. "A person having political experience and sound knowledge of Odisha's history and culture will be picked by the BJP as the next Chief Minister of the state," they added. The maiden BJP government in Odisha will work for the welfare of Odia people. The party is committed to fulfill all promises it has made in its poll manifesto for the state, they said. The BJP had won 78 Assembly seats of the total 147 in the state in the just concluded polls. The BJD managed to get 51 seats while 14 seats went to the Congress party, and four to Independent nominees.

# Churning in BJD following poll debacle

Everyone's eyes are now on Naveen who has the daunting task before him to revitalise the party bringing together all the workers and leaders

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 7:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is going through a churning for the first time in its 27-year-long history following the unexpected defeat in the recently concluded Assembly polls in the state. The party witnessed a major dent in the popularity of BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik who himself faced a humiliating defeat in Kantabanji seat under Bolangir Lok Sabha segment. The 77-year-old Patnaik won his home turf Hinjili constituency in Ganjam district by a very narrow margin. The writer-turned-politician had never tasted defeat since he joined politics in 1997 by winning the byelection from Aska Lok Sabha constituency after the death of his father and former Janata Dal stalwart, Bijayananda (Biju) Patnaik. Naveen Patnaik, a political novice, founded BJD, December 26, 1997 after splitting from the erstwhile Janata Dal. The BJD along with alliance partner Bharatiya Janata Party formed the government in Odisha winning the 2000 and 2004 Assembly elections. Though Patnaik ditched his alliance partner BJP, yet he registered an emphatic win in the 2009 Assembly elections due to his simplicity, anti-corruption crusader image and pro-poor welfare policies. He maintained this success in the future elections too. He continued to retain his pre-eminence and invincibility in Odisha politics with a constant rise in the BJD's vote share and seats tally during the 2014 and 2019 elections too. Meanwhile, the local units of the opposition BJP and the Indian National Congress



AGENCIES

were busy in their internecine squabbles over the question of leadership. The BJD finally breached the BJD citadel wresting power from the once-invincible Patnaik after 24 years of his rule. The BJD through an aggressive campaign managed to convey the message to the voters that the Odia self-identity, culture, language and literature would be under threat in the face of the taking over of the reins by Tamil Nadu-born VK Pandian. The party also cornered the BJD over the alleged poor health of Patnaik forcing the BJD supremo to issue clarifications about his health multiple times. As per the political observers, this is a watershed moment for the regional party and the over two decades' long political career of Patnaik.

Everyone's eyes are now on Patnaik who has the daunting task before him to revitalise the party bringing together all the workers and leaders. Experts opined that Patnaik has to build a second rung of leadership in the party who can lead the party in the future. The veteran leader neglected to nurture a second rung leadership that also cost the party dearly in this election. Speculation is also rife that the political career of bureaucrat-turned-politician Pandian has also come to an end with the re-

sults clearly indicating this rejection by the voters as the reported successor to Patnaik. Pandian had emerged as the most powerful leader in the BJD after Naveen Patnaik. He took the leading role in the selection of candidates, poll campaigning, election management, etc. Amidst the speculation over his political future, the former bureaucrat who used to lead the poll campaign left for the national capital immediately after the declaration of results June 4. He is yet to face the media after the party's humiliating poll defeat. Following the defeat, the BJD president had held two meetings with both the winning and losing candidates at his residence. Interestingly, Pandian was not present during the meetings further fanning the rumour about the end of his political career.

This raised the question about who will replace Pandian as the close confidant and trusted lieutenant of Patnaik. The BJD supremo has also been known to give carte blanche to someone, be it Pyarimohan Mohapatra, former principal secretary who served under his father Biju Patnaik, or Pandian, who greatly helped Patnaik in running the government and party throughout his political career.

# Satellite-based toll collection soon

**NATIONAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY OF INDIA INVITES GLOBAL BIDS FOR GNSS-BASED ELECTRONIC TOLL COLLECTION**



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 7:** The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has invited expressions of interest (EOIs) from around the world for implementation of Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)-based electronic toll collection to provide seamless and barrier-free tolling experience on National Highways users, an official statement said Friday. The move is aimed at putting an end to physical toll booth on highways. "To provide seamless and barrier-free tolling experience to

National Highway users and enhance efficiency and transparency of toll operations, Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IHMCL), a company promoted by NHAI, has invited Global Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from innovative and qualified companies to develop and implement GNSS-based electronic toll collection system in India," the statement said.

NHAI plans to implement GNSS-based electronic toll collection (ETC) system within the existing FASTag ecosystem, initially using a hybrid model where both RFID-based ETC and GNSS-based ETC will operate simultaneously, the statement added. According to the statement, dedicated GNSS lanes will be available at toll plazas, allowing vehicles using the GNSS-based ETC to pass through freely

To leverage the advance satellite technology, the EOIs aim to identify experienced and capable companies that can deliver a robust, scalable, and efficient toll charger software, which will serve as the backbone for the implementation of GNSS-based electronic toll collection in India, the statement said. Implementation of GNSS-based electronic toll collection in India will facilitate smooth movement of vehicles along the National Highways and is envisaged to provide many benefits to highway users such as barrier-less free-flow tolling leading to hassle-free riding experience and distance-based tolling where users will pay only for the stretch they have travelled on a National Highway, it said. The GNSS-based electronic toll collection will also result in more efficient toll collection as it helps to plug leakages and check toll evaders, it added.

# CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit made before Notary Public, Bhadrak, I Sayed Monam Ali, aged 49 yrs, S/o- Late Sayed Abdul Rasid of Miramohalla, Near Miramohalla Masjid, Bankabazar, Bhadrak do solemnly affirm that previously my name was Sayed Monam and at present I known as Sayed Monam Ali. In this affidavit I swear that Sayed Monam Ali and Sayed Monam is one and same person. Sd./- Sayed Monam Ali

# Exercise may preserve cognition in hypertension patients

IN 2019, STUDY BY SPRINT MIND SHOWED THAT INTENSIVELY TREATING BLOOD PRESSURE IN OLDER PEOPLE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED THE RISK OF DEVELOPING MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

Physical activity could help older people with high blood pressure lower their risk of dementia, a new research has found. Previous studies have found that people with high blood pressure, or hypertension, are at an increased risk of cognitive impairment, including dementia, in which an individual's memory and thinking abilities are affected, severely impacting their daily lives. In this study, researchers at Wake Forest University, US, examined how physical activity impacted the risk of mild cognitive impairment (preceding stage of dementia) in older people with hypertension.

The team found that the participants engaging in vigorous physical activity at least once a week had lower rates of mild cognitive impairment and dementia. The researchers noted that nearly 60 per cent of the participants, all aged 50 years and above, reported having performed activities that made them sweat, along with increasing heart rate and breathing at least once a week. "It is welcome news that a higher number of older adults are engaging in physical exercise. This also suggests that older adults who recognise the importance of exercise may be more inclined to exercise at



higher intensity," said Richard Kazibwe, an assistant professor of internal medicine at the School of Medicine, Wake Forest University. However, the researchers found the protective impact of vigorous exercise was more pro-

nounced for those younger than 75 years of age. "While this study provides evidence that vigorous exercise may preserve cognitive function in high-risk patients with hypertension, more research is needed to include device-based physical activity measurements and more diverse participant populations," said Kazibwe, lead author of the study published in Alzheimer's and Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association. The latest is part of the larger 'Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial' (SPRINT) study that showed that intensive control of blood pressure to a target of less than 120 mm Hg reduced the risks of cardiovascular disease and death. It included more than 9,300 participants with hypertension ages 50 and older. It was randomly assigned to intensive or standard blood pressure treatment (limiting systolic blood pressure to less than 140 mm Hg). The findings were published in 2015. In 2019, results of the 'Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial Memory and Cognition in Decreased Hypertension' (SPRINT MIND) study showed that intensively treating blood pressure in older people significantly reduced the risk of developing mild cognitive impairment.

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# SHGs jittery over fate of Mission Shakti

Even as BJP has stormed to power with full majority for the first time in the state, chatters are abuzz that the new government may replace several schemes including the Mission Shakti, leaving the SHG members and several residents with uncertainty and despair

POST NEWS NETWORK



### Baripada, June 7: Members of women self-help groups (SHGs) in Mayurbhanj district have become self-reliant and financially independent by undertaking various livelihood programmes under the Mission Shakti scheme, a report said.

However, the SHG members and residents of the district are in utter apprehension over possible abolition of Mission Shakti programme after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stormed into power by gaining majority in the recently concluded elections. They are now in a dilemma whether the new BJP government will continue with the schemes and programmes launched during the last 24 years of the former BJD government or abolish them. The possibility of scrapping the BJD schemes or replacing them has started haunting the SHG members while they are anxious about the approach of the new government that would be formed soon. This has pushed them into distress. Reports said sabai grass cul-

in Rairangpur block, 1,238 in Raruan block, 1,422 in Saraskana block, 1,436 in Shamakhunta block, 1,002 in Sukruli block, 1,693 in Suliapada block, 1,679 in Thakurmunda block, 855 in Tiring block and 1,368 in Udala block. In order to strengthen the Mission Shakti programme and ensure its proper implementation, the state government had created district level federations, block level federations, gram panchayat level federations and engaged Bank Mitras, though with nominal remunerations.

The state government had even announced to pay pension to the women SHG members. However, some observers, who were having a close watch on the functioning of the scheme, said the scheme lost its direction as a few unscrupulous SHG office bearers started doing politics while there were reports of pilferage of funds which in turn cost the BJD government dearly. Consequently, the votes of the women members went in favour of BJP.

Meanwhile, the residents are also apprehensive on continuation of Aahaar scheme, LAccMI bus service, Nua-O scholarship, BSKY and other host of schemes launched by the BJD government. On the other hand, BJP has promised to launch Lakhpati Didi scheme where every women will get a voucher of ₹50,000.



**INFRA PUSH:** An earthmover dismantling an old bridge connecting Municipality Square to Jail Square in Sambalpur to pave way for construction of a new bridge, Friday

# Overconfidence led to Ray's downfall

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, June 7:** Despite the saffron wave sweeping Odisha, BJP's Rourkela MLA candidate Dilip Ray lost to BJD's Sarada Prasad Nayak. It was an unexpected result keeping in mind that Ray indeed was a heavy-weight candidate and had emerged victorious in many elections before this one. Political analysts however, have their own opinions on the result. Some said that Ray was 'overconfident' while others pointed out that his 'camp had taken Sarada lightly' and did not campaign the way it should have.



were too many people who were giving orders and opinions in the Ray camp. They pointed out that this led to a 'disjointed' campaign and in the end Ray suffered because of it. It was a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth, they added. However, an insider to the Ray camp stated that strife within the local unit of the BJP here led to Ray's defeat. "Once Ray's name was announced as a candidate,

many of them started working for the BJD," the insider said on condition of anonymity. "In fact many of them even voted for the BJD," he added. Orissa POST had reported this issue May 10. Another Ray camp insider said that Nihar Ray's rebellion was a key factor in Ray's loss. Nihar had filed his nomination after BJP announced Ray as its candidate. Even though he did not win, the votes Nihar got were

enough to upset Ray's appercart, the person opined. However, above all, it was the mistake of taking Sarada lightly which played a pivotal role in Ray's defeat, many including the BJP cadres opined. "Many of them (Ray camp) thought that they would end Sarada's political career. They failed to assess the pulse of the people and so lost," said a political analyst. "There were large chunks of voters, especially in Bondamunda locality who did not like Ray as a candidate and hence did not vote for him," he added. In the end Nayak emerged victorious with 64,660 votes as against Ray's 61,108. Congress candidate Birendra Nath Pattnaik may have got only 8,751 votes, but then it was enough to spoil Ray's party. Also the decision of the Marwari community here to desert Ray was another reason for his downfall, others opined.

# STR to stay shut from June 12 to Sept 30

PNN/AGENCIES

**Baripada, June 7:** The Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj district will remain closed for tourists from June 12 to September 30 in view of the monsoon, an official notification said Friday. STR field director Prakash Chandra Gogineni in a notification said that the exact date of

reopening will be notified and published in daily newspapers later. "However the ecotourism complex at Jamuani, Gurgudia, Kumari, Barehipani and Ramtirtha shall remain open for visitors," the notification said. Officials said that the entry of tourists to the reserve forest is prohibited from mid-June every

year during the rainy season as road connectivity to various locations inside the sanctuary gets disrupted. The national park, a major tourist destination of Odisha, usually reopens from the first week of November. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD), southwest monsoon may arrive in South Odisha in the next 2-3 days.

# Post dad's demise, youth vows to popularise puppet dance

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Champua, June 7:** Setting yet another example of preserving the dying traditional art forms of Odisha, Arjun Singh of a sleepy village under this block in Keonjhar district has taken a pledge to help 'puppet dance' (Kandhei Nacha in Odia) thrive following the untimely demise of his father Munibar Singh, a popular puppeteer of the region.

Puppetry in Odisha has served as a medium of entertainment for the general public, not only in rural areas but also in urban setups. After the untimely demise of his father Munibar of Tiansi village, Arjun has kept his promise made to his father by embracing this traditional art form and using it as a source of livelihood for his family. According to sources, after Munibar's death, his son

Arjun has upheld the traditional art form and never let it lose the popularity. Arjun has gained considerable experience by assisting his father in various puppet dance events, and eventually he established himself as an ace puppeteer in the region. He has taken the responsibility of 'Jai Jagannath Kandhei Dance Art Institute', founded by his father. Arjun is leaving no stone unturned in the growth and popularity of puppet

dance and he performs numerous puppet plays based on mythological stories like 'Kala Kahnei' and 'Kansa Badha', bringing wooden puppets to life. He portrays various characters through these puppets to entertain the audience, especially children and the elderly. Arjun maintained that the gradually disappearing puppet dance could further prosper if government provides some further support.

He also mentioned that the income generated from the puppet shows held in different locations is insufficient to meet the needs of the family as his family members also assist him in the profession. So, his family has to depend on farming as well. While mythological stories serve as a medium of social change, creating awareness through traditional puppet dance about these stories is his ultimate goal.

# Transforming wastelands into orchard havens



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, June 7:** In the village of Bipilingi of Chhatrapur in Ganjam district, Bharat Reddy's journey from barren land to flourishing orchard is a testament to his perseverance. What began as a challenging endeavour for Reddy has now blossomed into a thriving guava and citrus farm, thanks to collaboration with the Tata Steel Foundation (TSF). Initially when he was working on barren lands, Reddy's dream of developing a fruit orchard seemed distant. However, with TSF's assistance, he successfully planted 1,100 guava trees and 150 citrus trees, transforming his one-and-a-half-acre land to a bountiful orchard. Through comprehensive training and bio-agricultural inputs provided by TSF, Reddy has reaped over three quintals of guavas this

year alone. Reddy shared his excitement about the fruitful harvest, highlighting that selling the produce at ₹70 per kilogram in the local market has significantly boosted his family's income. He has earned an additional income of ₹22,000 by selling guava only and is now waiting for the citrus harvest. This remarkable achievement is further underscored by the variety of guava he cultivates—Taiwan Pink—known for its resilience and rapid productivity, maturing in just 11 months. The success of Reddy's orchard symbolises more than just agricultural yield; it represents sustainable growth and enduring prosperity.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
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**NOTICE**  
 No. 548 Dated 07.06.2024  
 ELBO/W.P. Permit (EHT) EXAM / 2023

No.AA-02 : The result of Workman Permit (EHT) Examination - 2023 has been published vide this office Notification No. 545 dated 07.06.2024.

All the successful candidates are requested to apply online for obtaining the permit through "eicelectrityodisha.nic.in" / edistrict.odisha.gov.in within six (06) months from publication of result. The application service name "CANDIDATES QUALIFIED IN THE EXAMINATION FOR ISSUANCE OF WORKMAN PERMIT".

During verification of documents, if any discrepancies are detected then the Workman Permit will not be issued to the candidate even if he / she have qualified the examination. In no case the application of the successful candidates for issue of Workman Permit shall be considered after lapse of six (06) months from date of publication of result.

The result is also available in our official website "eicelectrityodisha.nic.in" for information of all concerned.

Sd./- A.C.E.-cum-Secretary, ELBO  
 Bhubaneswar

OIPR-04003/11/0002/2425

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
**ENGAGEMENT OF CMPs in SAMBALPUR DIVISION**

**EMPLOYMENT NOTICE NO. 02/2024-CMP Date: 03.06.2024**

Applications are invited for engagement of 'Contract Medical Practitioner' on contract basis in East Coast Railway, Sambalpur division. The engagement will be offered purely on contract basis for a period of one year or till the scheme become available or posting of a regular incumbent whichever is earlier, which can be renewed as a fresh contract on year to year basis.

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"Hindi version of this advert is available on the undermentioned link: [https://www.aai.aero/en/tender/tender-search? field\\_region\\_tid=All&field\\_airport\\_tid=All&term\\_node\\_tid\\_depth=All&field\\_tender\\_status\\_value=All&field\\_tender\\_last\\_sale\\_date\\_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D%5Bdate%5D%5D&combine=enlistment](https://www.aai.aero/en/tender/tender-search?field_region_tid=All&field_airport_tid=All&term_node_tid_depth=All&field_tender_status_value=All&field_tender_last_sale_date_value%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D%5Bdate%5D%5D&combine=enlistment)

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
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**Appointment of Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Gujarat**

Applications are invited for the post of Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Gujarat. The Vice-Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

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**Procedure for appointment**

- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a Committee constituted under the provisions of Act of the University.
- The advertisement is available on the websites <http://www.education.gov.in> and <https://www.cug.ac.in/>.
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<https://vccrc.samarth.ac.in/index.php/>
- The above link will be active from 08.06.2024, 10:00 Hours to 07.07.2024, 17:00 Hours.

CBC-21201/11/0003/2425

**NOTICE**

This is for information of General Public that the process of receiving the applications for the PRADHANMANTRIRASHTRIYABALPURASKAR (PMRBP), 2025 has commenced on the National Awards Portal (<https://awards.gov.in>). The awards are given to those children who deserve recognition at the national level in the fields of Bravery, Sports, Social Service, Science & Technology, Environment, Arts & Culture and Innovation.

Any child above the age of 5 years and not exceeding 18 years (as on 31st July of respective year), who is an Indian Citizen and residing in India is eligible for the awards.

Open nominations from any citizen will be received only through National Awards Portal on <https://awards.gov.in>. Self-nomination & recommendations for the awards, both shall be considered. The last date for receipt of online application is 31.07.2024. For more details, please see National Awards Portal (<https://awards.gov.in>).

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THE MOTHER



## Eye On Future

In a major shake-up, right in the middle of a busy, busy election, the Central government announced key appointments at the joint secretary level, signalling a strategic shift in leadership. This bureaucratic overhaul included the empanelment of 26 IAS officers from the 1995 to 1999 batches as additional secretaries.

Among the notable appointments, Ajay Bhadoo is currently serving at the Election Commission of India (ECI), V. Seshadri, formerly with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), is leading the Telangana Chief Minister's Office (CMO) and Syed Ali Murtaza Rizvi is heading Telangana's Energy Department.

This sudden wave of appointments has sparked speculation about the continuity and stability of the current New Delhi establishment. But this may be just a hint of more sweeping changes to come in the days ahead. Sources have informed DKB that the government may soon release another list of appointments, even as speculation is rife that some key figures in the Modi sarkar may continue in their posts. While by the time you read this, the new government will be announced, these actions reveal the confidence that the Modi sarkar has in returning to power. So, despite the busy election period, it has ensured that some key aspects of administration are not overlooked.

### Election-year raids

In the run-up to the general elections, a dozen IAS and IPS officers have found themselves under the scrutiny of the mighty Enforcement Directorate (ED) and other investigative agencies in various corruption-related cases. Allegations range from corruption to money laundering, and some raids have been criticized as politically motivated.

Recently, a 2002-batch Jharkhand cadre IAS officer was summoned by the ED for questioning in a money laundering case. Similarly, a 2003-batch IAS Chhattisgarh cadre IAS officer was arrested by the ED, with investigations revealing his pivotal role in orchestrating a liquor syndicate's activities in the state.

In another instance, at least five IPS officers in Chhattisgarh are under the Anti-Corruption Bureau's scanner for their alleged involvement in the Mahadev betting app case. In another high-profile case, the ED raided the premises of a former Union Secretary DPIIT, following a CBI case that led to a money-laundering investigation.

These raids and arrests during an election year raise questions about the motivations behind the timing and broader implications for governance. It's not lost on anyone that some of these officers are in Opposition-ruled states. Are these actions then purely in the interest of justice, or is there an element of political vendetta? The answer might remain elusive, and it only adds another layer of intrigue to the already complex world of Indian politics.

### Odisha cadre Garg to lead Statistics Ministry beyond retirement

Saurabh Garg, senior IAS officer and Secretary of the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment has been appointed as Secretary of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Notably, Garg will continue to serve in this capacity for one year beyond his retirement on July 31. He will also take on the role of Secretary to the National Statistical Commission.

Interestingly, observers have pointed out that Garg's new appointment follows on the heels of the similar appointment of P.K. Tripathi as the Secretary to the Lokpal of India till superannuation and thereafter on a two-year contract. Is this a new trend?

An accomplished economist, Garg's academic credentials are impressive, having studied economics at Johns Hopkins University, besides IIM-Ahmedabad and IIT-Delhi. The Odisha cadre officer is known for his contributions to policy and programme implementation, particularly his role in conceptualizing the Kalia scheme in Odisha. This initiative provides crucial support to small farmers and sharecroppers and has, notably, served as a model for the national PM Kisan scheme. Most conspicuously, Garg was a major force behind the direct transfer scheme during his tenure as CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).

The move has caused some murmurs in Dilli's babu corridors, and while the immediate motive is unclear, time will eventually reveal how the transition unfolds. But one thing is clear: Garg's continued service after retirement suggests a recognition of his valuable experience and a desire for continuity in leadership.

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

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With increasing age, dullness of mind and heart sets in. **JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI**

Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive. **DALAI LAMA**

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. **NELSON MANDELA**

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **632:** Muhammad, the founder of the religion of Islam and of the Muslim community, died in Medina.
- **1191:** At the time of the Third Crusade, Richard I joined the Crusaders in Acre, having conquered Cyprus on his way there.
- **1916:** Biophysicist Francis Crick, who along with James Dewey Watson and Maurice Wilkins received the 1962 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for their determination of the molecular structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), was born in Northampton, England.
- **1966:** The National Football League and the American Football League announced a merger, which became effective in 1970.

### LOL

#### I'll use my seeing eye dog

PandaA blind man with a seeing eye dog at his side walks into a grocery store. The man walks to the middle of the store, picks up the dog by the tail, and starts swinging the dog around in circles over his head. The store manager, who has seen all this, thinks this is quite strange. So,



he decides to find out what's going on. The store manager approaches the blind man swinging the dog and says,

"Pardon me. May I help you with something." The blind man says, "No thanks. I'm just looking around."

## FOCUS PALESTINIAN ECONOMY

# LOOMING CATASTROPHE

At the head of the recent G7 summit, US Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen, in a rare rebuke of Israel, warned that its plans to cut off Palestinian financial institutions from the global banking system would threaten the West Bank's economic stability. But her warning may have come too late to stop Israel's far-right finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, who seems bent on undermining the last vestiges of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) already-limited self-governance in the West Bank.



Raja Khalidi

**THE MARCH TOWARD PALESTINIAN FISCAL SOVEREIGNTY IS INEVITABLE, BUT IT MUST HAPPEN SOONER RATHER THAN LATER**



**In yet another Israeli twist of the financial screws, the Bank of Israel has yet to accept the periodic exchange of accumulated stocks of Israeli shekels with Palestinian correspondent banks for foreign currency as stipulated under the Oslo Accords**

relationship has been forged over decades of occupation, characterized by a constant struggle for land, resources, and rights, and increasing violence by extremist Israeli settlers, who have long enjoyed impunity.

Part of the dependency dynamic involves Israel collecting and clearing customs and import taxes on behalf of the PA. So, when faced with European efforts to build momentum toward a political settlement of the crisis, Smotrich decided to seize these tax revenues, in addition to threatening new financial sanctions. Prior to the war, the PA was entitled to an average of \$270 million per month in total clearance revenues—enough to cover the salaries of 147,000 civil servants, its most essential current expenditure.

But for many years, Israel has made unilateral deductions, starting with unpaid utility and health bills owed to Israeli providers (based on government calculations). Since 2018, it has also deducted payments made to families of people whom the PA deems martyrs and to families of people imprisoned in Israel. By the end of 2023, these additional deductions amounted to around \$1.2 billion. This does not include deductions for unpaid utilities, health bills, and other deductions called "net lending,"

which totaled \$662 million in 2023 alone.

After the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas, Smotrich began deducting the amount that the PA spends on staff and pensioners in Gaza. By April 2024, these deductions, coupled with a steep decline in private consumption and imports, left the PA with under \$100 million per month in "eligible" revenues, around a quarter of its monthly budget.

Smotrich has threatened to freeze the transfer of that amount and any clearance funds, while also pushing legislation to expropriate the deducted funds—which have been held in escrow accounts—to finance Israel's war deficit. In yet another Israeli twist of the financial screws, the Bank of Israel has yet to accept the periodic exchange of accumulated stocks of Israeli shekels with Palestinian correspondent banks for foreign currency as stipulated under the Oslo Accords. This has led to panic among clients unable to deposit Israeli shekels. Meanwhile, the PA's salary arrears have reached at least six months. And that is only part of its \$8 billion public debt, which is around 60% of West Bank GDP. Hence, the PA is facing imminent fiscal collapse, with the West Bank "on the brink, risking an ex-

plosion any time," as the normally cautious Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa recently put it.

The G7 leaders and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, an international donor group for Palestine that met last week, must heed this warning as they consider making far-reaching decisions that could be as momentous as the war's outcome. Moreover, policymakers should be clear-eyed on what can and cannot be done. It is absurd to demand that the PA implement reforms, build state institutions, reconstruct Gaza, and police its people while Israel simultaneously withholds its main source of finance.

In the early days of Biden's presidency, some Palestinians, still reeling from the hostility of the Trump era and without a viable path to independence, hoped that he might push for Palestinian rights. In 2021, I proposed a US-sponsored financial New Deal for Palestine, which would reinforce the PA fiscal position, without requiring US diplomatic recognition of Palestinian statehood. The idea would be to grant Palestine formal status or reach an ad hoc arrangement at the International Monetary Fund so that it can tap international financial assistance like any other developing country, a small step towards sovereignty.

Implementing this plan is more important than ever: If the countries that have recognized Palestinian statehood—either recently or in the past—want their declaration to be more than a symbolic gesture, they must start treating Palestine as the state it will eventually become. And if the United States wants to prove that it is more than an accessory to Israel's war, it must lift its veto on Palestine's bid to become the state it deserves to be. The march toward Palestinian fiscal sovereignty is inevitable, but it must happen sooner rather than later.

The writer is Director-General of the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS).  
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## SPECTRUM NDA'S THIRD TERM

# Neither a full democracy nor a full autocracy

Electoral battle of 2024 over and the BJP-led NDA government returning for the third term, techniques of governance such as suppression of democratic movements, persecution of religious minorities are thankfully expected to put on the backburner. More so, in the backdrop of compulsions of a coalition government, with BJP failing to get a majority on its own. The fear amongst the minorities viz this ruling dispensation was deeply disturbing for a democratic country like India. The Hindu consolidation strategy was being carried out, but minorities need to be protected in all possible manner. History reveals that fascism is a process that unfolded in many countries that includes inter-war Germany and Italy but also Spain, Portugal and Hungary.

In India, a growing appetite for such tendencies has been manifest among BJP's corporate and upper-class backers. "The billionaire raj headed by India's modern bourgeoisie is now more unequal than the British raj headed by the colonial forces", had pointed out a recent paper of French economist, Thomas Piketty and others.

It is a well-established fact that

not just authoritarian tendencies of the ruling dispensation but also the interference in the working of various agencies, not sparing even the educational institutions, has come to the forefront from think tanks in India and abroad. Apart from this, some forms of dissent have witnessed dangerous consequences, leading to arrests and detention of prominent political leaders from the Opposition and civil society activists. All this has led to questions. A lot of questions were raised at home and abroad whether the country is steadily eschewing the democratic path.

One may refer to democracy watchdogs who agree that today India resides somewhere in a neither region between full democracy and full autocracy. While democracy-watching organisations categorise democracies differently, they all classify India today as a "hybrid regime" that is, neither a full democracy nor a full autocracy.

India's democratic downgrading moved 1.4 billion of the world's 8 billion people into the category of autocratizing countries. Wherever one draws the conceptual lines between the land of democracy the sea of autocracy,

and the marshlands marking the hybrid regions, the democratic world is considerably less populous without India among its ranks. The question of whether India is a democracy today is not just pivotal in analysing the country's political future but in understanding the democratic trends more broadly.

In this connection, it may be pertinent to refer to an article 'Why India's Democracy Is Not Dying' in 2021 by Akhilesh Pillalamarri, an international affairs analyst, writer, and journalist focusing on geopolitics, international security, Asia, who pointed out "cultural and social trends (in India today) are not necessarily evidence of democratic backsliding, but are rather evidence of social norms in India that are illiberal towards speech, individual expression, and criticism." It is here that the question arises whether India has really departed the shores of democracy? And if so, is India's transition into a hybrid regime reversible?"

In the recent elections, it was clearly discernible that the powerful candidates lacked in democratic spirit and were trying various tricks to hoodwink the Indian

electorate by bringing in religious issues or talking about subjects that do not concern the common man. The liberal democratic polity was no longer in evidence in what the candidates speak and try to explain to the electorate.

Another factor that has affected democratic values is the growing nexus in capitalism between political leaders, corporate and pampered bureaucracy and this has left little room for a transparent and pluralistic democracy to survive where the voice of those at the grassroots levels would be heard. This nexus has helped in cornering wealth of a select section of society oblivious of the poor and impoverished. The concentration of wealth and income is not judiciously distributed through taxes and subsidies, to improve livelihoods of the masses.

It turns out that a tiny elite controls both social and economic life of the people. With a continuous endeavour being made to merge religion with politics, widen the divide among communities and bring about social disharmony, the political class is thinking of itself only. Will and can there be a much-needed correction, is the big question ahead.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

**A LOT OF QUESTIONS WERE RAISED AT HOME AND ABROAD WHETHER THE COUNTRY IS STEADILY ESCHEWING THE DEMOCRATIC PATH**

### Kangana episode

Sir, Actor Kangana Ranaut is a known provocateur and one who airs caustic and highly despicable comments against all her adversaries, particularly the opposition leaders to please her political bosses. Though her highly derogatory comment that women joined the farmers' agitation just to get a sum of ₹100 paid to them, exceeded all decency, it is unfortunate that a lady CISF security staff slapped her on her face and the actor's comments against the farmers is said to be the reason for the constable doing so. One has a strong doubt whether she tried to provoke the constable which should have made her to lose her cool and hit the actor hard on her face. No doubt, this episode has shamed Kangana badly who has recently become one of the law makers of the country by winning the MP seat in Mandi. Only an impartial enquiry into the episode could bring out the truth shrouding the incident in its entirety. One only hopes that at least from now on, Kangana who has become a representative of the public will act with responsibility not only in her conduct and behaviour but also in passing comments in public and social media against anyone.

Tharcius S. Fernando, CHENNAI

### Stock check

Sir, In 2024, Indian people have given a verdict that will be remembered for a very long time in Indian politics. The stock market's sudden spurt and the downfall are part and parcel of the trading system. One day it turned out to be a profit day and the next day it turned out to be a game changer taking out the profit you gained on the previous day from the stock market. So, the stock brokers are cautious in their approach to sell or buy. We are not sure about whether the stocks would go up or down. The speculations are on stock checks and the shifting the ups and downs as a stock scam is rather childish. The cry baby is creating a scenario to catch up the headlines. India's equity market has entered the market cap of the top five economies of the world. There must be a fact check before uttering about a stock scam.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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# 68% of candidates in J&K polled fewer than NOTA votes

**Srinagar, June 7:** Sixty-eight per cent of the total 100 candidates in the fray from Jammu and Kashmir's five Lok Sabha seats polled fewer than None Of The Above (NOTA) votes, according to Election Commission data. Cumulatively, 34,788 voters pressed the NOTA button in the five seats, showing their rejection of the candidates fielded by parties.

The maximum 12,938 NOTA votes were polled in the Udhampur constituency of Jammu region, a seat retained

by BJP candidate Jitendra Singh. There were 11 other candidates in the fray from Udhampur, and NOTA polled more votes than nine of them.

In the neighbouring Jammu seat, 4,645 voters pressed the NOTA button, which is more than votes individually garnered by 18 candidates. There were 22 candidates in the fray from the seat which has been retained by the



**BJP's Jugal Kishore.** In the Srinagar seat, the number of NOTA votes was 5,998. There were 24 candidates in the fray from the constituency and most of them -- 18 -- got fewer votes than NOTA.

In the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, 6,223 voters favoured NOTA. There were 20 candidates were in the fray from the seat, and nine of them secured fewer than NOTA votes.

In the Baramulla seat, 4,984

voters used the NOTA option. There were 22 candidates in the fray and 14 of them polled fewer votes. Thus, out of the total 100, 68 candidates have secured fewer votes than NOTA, an analysis of the EC data shows.

Meanwhile, in the Ladakh Union territory, which was part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir until the Centre divided J-K into two Union territories and abrogated Article 370 in August 2019, NOTA was favoured only by 912 voters.

Ladakh is the sole Parliamentary constituency in the UT. There were only three candidates in the fray and all of them got more votes than NOTA.

# 18th MIFF to be held from June 15 to 21

**New Delhi, June 7:** The 18th edition of the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) will be held in Mumbai from June 15 to 21, Union Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju announced Friday.

Addressing a press conference here at the National Media Centre, Jaju said the film gala, which showcases non-feature films (documentary, short Fiction and animation) will be at the FD-NFDC Complex in Mumbai.

A premier international event in the documentary film world, the Mumbai International Film Festival is held once in two years since its inception in 1990.

The 2024 edition will open with the screening of National Geographic's documentary "Billy & Molly: An Otter Love Story". The organisers received a record number of 1018 films from 38 countries and across 65 languages for the latest edition.

A total of 118 films have been selected by the three selection committees, comprising eminent film experts for the International (25) and National (77) competition sections along with 16 films in MIFF PRISM.

There will be eight world premieres, six international premieres, 17 Asia premieres.

# Water situation grim in Marathwada

**THE FIVE RESERVOIRS WHERE THE WATER LEVEL HAS DIPPED TO ZERO PER CENT ARE SIDDHESHWAR (HINGOLI), MAJALGAON AND MANJARA (BOTH BEED), NIMNA TERNA AND SINA KOLEGAON (BOTH DHARASHIV)**

**Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, June 7:** There is no water left in five out of 11 major reservoirs in Maharashtra's Marathwada region, while the Jayakwadi dam, the biggest of them, currently holds only four per cent of its total storage capacity, officials said Friday.

The Marathwada region comprises Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, Jalna, Beed, Parbhani, Hingoli, Dharashiv, Latur and Nanded districts.

Eleven major projects in this region are facing no availability of water due to scanty rainfall last year. The water stock in

four of these reservoirs has gone down to zero per cent. The Jayakwadi dam, the biggest reservoir in the Marathwada region, is currently holding only three TMC (thousand million cubic feet) water, which is only 4 per cent of its total storage capacity, the divisional commissioner office said in its report.

The five reservoirs where the water level has dipped to zero per cent are Siddheshwar (Hingoli), Majalgaon and Manjara (both Beed), Nimna Terna and Sina Kolegaon (both Dharashiv).

Other water level in seven other projects is as follows: Jayakwadi (Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar) 4.04 per cent, Nimn Dudhna (Parbhani) 6.23, Vishnupuri (Nanded) 15.58, Manar (Nanded) 22.63, Yeldari (Parbhani) 26.66 and Penganga (Nanded) 29.23 per cent, the report said.

The current aggregate water stock in these projects is 11.28 per cent as Friday, which was 38.64 per cent on the same day last year, it said.

In the Jayakwadi dam the water stock on the same day last year was 34.94 per cent, it said. Despite the water stock level of Manjara dam hitting rock bottom, the civic authorities said no water cut will be



## Address water woes: Maha CM to officials

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has directed officials to address water scarcity issues and establish fodder camps for farm relief, state forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said. Speaking to reporters after a cabinet meet here, Mungantiwar also said a decision was taken to speed up disbursement of benefits to 'Divyanjan' (persons with disabilities). "CM Shinde has instructed officials to look into regions facing water scarcity and provide relief. They have been told to expedite the process of establishing fodder camps for farmers to accommodate their cattle," he added.

Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar city receives water once every eight days depending on the water situation of the Jayakwadi dam, a civic official said, adding that the work of laying a new parallel supply line is underway and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

implemented in the city. "At present, we are supplying water every four days in Latur. Though we are going into dead storage, we have no issue for the next 3-4 months. So there will be no water cut in Latur city," a senior municipal official said.

# 'Oppn in new LS would be stronger'



**Srinagar, June 7:** The days of "dictatorship" are over and the Opposition in the new Lok Sabha would be stronger, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah said here Friday.

The former chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir said people have given their verdict and the Constitution has been saved.

"This time there will be a strong Opposition. When I was in Parliament, we were weak. Nobody used to listen to us and there was dictatorship, but thank God, dictatorship is over now," Abdullah told reporters here. He was responding to a question about whether the Opposition in the new Lok Sabha would be stronger than the last one given their strength has increased.

Asked about the NDA forming the government for the third consecutive time, the NC president, who represented Srinagar in the previous Lok Sabha, said, "Let them form the government, then we will see". To a question whether the new NDA government will succeed, the former Union minister said, "Let us wait and see what happens".

"You are in media and you and I both will see. Let us wait. Why are you in haste?" he added.

In response to a question about the results of the Parliamentary polls, Abdullah said people have given their verdict.

"They showed that people hold the power and it was proven in these elections. This is a huge achievement. People have the power to vote and can make or break anyone," he said.

Referring to the exit polls which claimed a brute majority for the BJP, the NC president said the pollsters should shut their shops and apologise to the people.

"Those who claimed 370-400 paar (cross), I think they should stop these exit polls, they should shut their shops. These people (exit pollsters) should apologise to the people for creating misunderstandings among the people," he said.

# Namesake muddle in MLC polls

**Nashik, June 7:** A Shiv Sena candidate from Nashik for the Maharashtra Legislative Council polls Friday allegedly beat up an independent contestant who had the same name as his since the former believed this was a ploy to create confusion among voters and dampen his chances of victory.

Police had to intervene as supporters of Kishore Bhikaji Darade, the candidate from Chief Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena for the Nashik Division Teachers constituency, and those of independent contestant Kishore Prabhakar Darade, who is a resident of Kopergaon in

Ahmednagar, indulged in a scuffle after the altercation between the two on the last day of filing of nominations.

The incident, during which the Shiv Sena candidate, who is also sitting MLC from the constituency, tried to stop his namesake from filing his nomination, took place in the divisional commissioner's office complex here. The MLC claimed the namesake was an unknown person and had been pencilled into the con-

test by Sandip Gulwe of the rival Shiv Sena (UBT).

Incidentally, the poll for the Nashik Division Teachers' constituency is becoming a fight of namesakes as there are three persons named Sandip Gulwe in the fray. MLC Darade, who refuted allegations that he had man-handled anyone, and the other Darade were taken to Nashik Road police station, though no case was filed in connection with the fracas till late evening.

A total of 40 candidates filed nominations for the seat, including the two Darades and the three Gulwes. Scrutiny of nomination forms will take place June 10 and the last date of withdrawal is June 12.



Maharashtra Congress President Nana Patole felicitates newly-elected independent MP Vishal Patil during a meeting with the newly-elected party MPs of the state, at Tilak Bhavan in Mumbai. Senior party leader Sushil Kumar Shinde, AICC in-charge of Maharashtra Ramesh Chennithala and newly-elected party MP Varsha Gaikwad are also seen

# Amarnath pilgrims' base camp gets major facelift



**Jammu, June 7:** The main base camp for the Amarnath pilgrims in Jammu capital city is getting a major facelift with the authorities setting a deadline of June 20 for completion of the works, officials said.

The 52-day pilgrimage to the 3,880-meter-high cave shrine in south Kashmir is scheduled to start June 29 and conclude August 19, they said. The Bhagwati Nagar-based Yatri Niwas serves as the main base camp here for the pilgrims from across the country before they leave for Kashmir to pay obeisance at the 3,880-metre-high holy cave shrine of Amarnath.

Jammu Divisional Commissioner Ramesh Kumar and Jammu Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Anand Jain Friday visited the base camp to review the preparations.

Reviewing the preparations at a high-level official meeting, Kumar was apprised about the status of the ongoing works, including face-lifting of entry gate, resurfacing of roads, levelling of parking ground, white-wash, renovation of washrooms, repair works of ACs, fans, installation of lights, flood lights, being executed by different departments and other works inside the Yatri Niwas for providing best facilities to the pilgrims, they said.

# Sharad Pawar is the best striker in Maha LS polls

**Mumbai, June 7:** The woefully truncated Nationalist Congress Party (SP) led by the indefatigable Sharad Pawar managed to put up the best show in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra, surpassing all expectations.

As a Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) key ally, the NCP(SP) had fielded candidates in just 10 seats with the new symbol of a "Trumpeter", in comparison to the Shiv Sena(UBT)'s 21 nominees and Congress' 17 contestants. Maharashtra has 48 Lok Sabha seats.

However, Pawar lived up to the old sobriquets pasted on him, like 'Chanakya' or 'Machiavelli' and trumped in eight of the 10 seats, besides losing one seat (Satarra) narrowly owing to a similar symbol allotted to another candidate there.

Overall, the MVA gave a spectacular showing, bagging 30 of the 48 seats, relegating the ruling MahaYuti allies to a single digit each -- Shiv Sena (7), Bharatiya Janata Party (9), and Nationalist Congress Party (1). There is also an independent

elected from Sangli who is likely to support the MVA, which could up its tally to 31 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

Despite leading a broken party with a new name (NCP-SP), and unknown symbol ("Trumpeter") compared with his nephew and Deputy CM Ajit Pawar who walked away with the original name (NCP) and symbol (Clock), the smiling Sharad Pawar was unruffled.

Racing against time -- the original party had vertically split in July 2023 -- in just nine months, Sharad Pawar had the NCP(SP) baby ready for a devastating delivery vis-a-vis the NCP now with Ajit Pawar.

In the five seats (including one given to an ally) it fought, the NCP won a solitary seat -- Raigad, by state chief Sunil Tatkare -- and the huge embarrassment was the loss of Sunetra Pawar, wife of Ajit Pawar in the Pawar clan's den of Baramati, bagged by her 'nanad' Supriya Sule for the fourth time.

The NCP(SP) got a handsome vote share (10.27 per cent) compared with the NCP's measly (3.60 per cent).

The outcome lived up to the



claims of both 'broken-hearted' leaders -- Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray -- that though their parties were split and the majority of elected leaders along with the names/symbols were snatched (by Ajit Pawar and CM Eknath Shinde) -- "the ordinary masses and voters are with us".

The split shock generated immense sympathy to push the MahaYuti into a corner at the hustings, and it tumbled from a tally of 41 seats in 2019 to 17 in 2024.

Displaying the qualities of a wizened, experienced leader, only Sharad Pawar appeared cool and unperturbed after the NCP he founded 25 years ago cracked into two pieces.

As other worried leaders, including Supriya Sule, Dr Jitendra Awhad, and Jayant Patil wondered, Sharad Pawar had airily declared that he would build a strong new party after all the deadwood had drifted away.

A day after the LS results, his grand-nephew Rohit Pawar, MLA, revealed that around 18-19 MLAs from the Ajit Pawar faction reportedly yearned to return to Bhisma Pitamaha's fold!

The developments were reminiscent of Sharad Pawar's famed rally of October 18, 2019, when he had addressed an LS by-election rally in the rain in Satarra for his party nominee Shrinivas Patil and ensured the defeat of a Chhatrapati -- the royal blood Udayanraje P. Bhonsle, 13th direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and BJP candidate.

Interestingly, the same Chhatrapati Udayanraje P. Bhonsle has won this time from Satarra trouncing the NCP(SP)'s Shashikant J. Shinde by a tin-thin margin (32,771 votes), which was allegedly owing to a similar symbol ("Trumpet") which confused the voters and chipped off Shinde's share.

"He is the Man of Series. His name is Sharad Pawar", posted an elated NCP(SP) General Secretary Dr Jitendra Awhad post-results, reflecting the mood of many in Maharashtra.

The eight new MPs elected across regions are Supriya Sule (Baramati), Dr Amol Kolhe (Shirur), Nilesh Lanke (Ahmednagar), Bajrang Sonwane (Beed), Ranjitsinh Mohite-Patil (Madha), Bhaskar Bagare (Dindori), Amar Kale (Wardha) and Suresh Mhatra alias Balyamama (Bhiwandi).

At 83, the sprightly Sharad Pawar not only tended to the NCP(SP) home flock but also campaigned vigorously for the MVA-INDIA bloc candidates in the state and out of Maharashtra, contributing to many more victories.

Soon after the party split in 2023 when he promised to re-build the party, a mediaperson asked him 'who could be the most reliable face of the party', and a grinning Sharad Pawar raised his right hand and declared: "Sharad Pawar...!"

Evoking much mirth then for his sense of humour, nine months later, a victorious Sharad Pawar winked and had the last laugh...!



The Supreme Court is trying to solve the water problem. The Supreme Court is continuously hearing this matter and has ordered a meeting of the Upper Yamuna River Board. It will hear the matter again Monday. But for the last five days, when the hearing was on in the court, the Haryana government has been conspiring behind its back

CENTRE GEARS UP FOR IDY

The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B) and the Ministry of AYUSH Friday started the preparations for the organisation of the International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2024. The scale and the level of celebration of the IDY have increased every year since the recognition of June 21 as the "International Yoga Day"



of the day quote

Please read the manifesto, what we say is, the VVPAT slip, in order for us to read, displays for about 4-5 seconds and then the slip falls inside the box. What we say in the manifesto is that there should be one more improvement

In a coalition there has to be give and take. There is no big brother in a coalition. Everyone needs to work unitedly to defeat the BJP

Having experienced the tactics of the BJP, the minute they form government with you, they will break the promises and try to break your parties too. You'll have experienced it earlier

SHORT TAKES

Flood situation improves in Assam

Guwahati: The flood situation in Assam improved further with major rivers in the state showing a receding trend, though a population of 54,467 were still affected in eight districts, according to an official report. Twenty-five lives were lost due to floods so far, while 34 have died in storms, rain and landslides since May 28, it said. The affected districts are Cachar, Kamrup, Hojai, Morigaon, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Nagaon and West Karbi Anglong, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority said in a bulletin. A population of 6,175 are taking shelter in 44 relief camps in the affected districts.

Mirwaiz placed under house arrest

Srinagar: Senior separatist leader and Chief cleric, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was placed under house arrest Friday, Anjuman-e-Auqaf Jamia Masjid Srinagar said in a statement. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq traditionally offers Friday prayers at the Jamia Masjid in the old city Nowhatta area of Srinagar where he also delivers the Friday sermon. Anjuman-e-Auqaf Jamia Masjid which manages the affairs of the grand mosque said that authorities placed Mirwaiz Umar under house arrest at his city outskirts Nigeen residence.

Three killed as car overturns in UP

Banda (UP): Three persons travelling in a car were killed after their vehicle lost control and overturned on the road side here Friday, police said. Inspector of the Fatehpur Kotwali police station Dinesh Chandra Mishra said, "Harcharan Preet (50), Jasveer Singh (45) and Gurpreet (35) were killed when their car lost control and overturned in the afternoon in Brahmanpur village."

Tamang to take oath as Sikkim CM June 10

Gangtok: The swearing-in ceremony of PS Tamang as Sikkim Chief Minister was deferred by a day and the SKM supreme will now take oath for the second term June 10, party leaders said Friday. The decision to defer the swearing-in ceremony to June 10 was taken during the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) legislature party meeting, held earlier in the day at the Chief Minister's official residence, Mintokgang, as Tamang will visit Delhi Sunday to attend the oath-taking ceremony of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister for the third time, they said.

SP MLA, four others get seven-year jail term in arson case

Kanpur (UP), June 7: Samajwadi Party MLA Irfan Solanki, his younger brother and three others were sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment Friday in connection with setting fire to a woman's house in a bid to grab her land. The sentencing has opened the doors for Solanki's disqualification from the Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

According to the Representation of the People Act, any public representative imprisoned for two or more years will be disqualified from the Assembly from the date of conviction. Not only this, after completion of the jail term, the person will not be eligible for membership of the House for the next six years.

Police had booked Irfan Solanki, his brother Rizwan Solanki and about four dozen others for rioting and arson 19 months ago. The session MP-MLA court presided by judge Satyendra Nath Tripathi convicted the MLA, his brother, as well as Shauqat Ali, Mohammad Sharif and Izrail Monday while the quantum of sentence was pronounced Friday.

District Government Counsel Dileep Awasthi told PTI that the court also imposed a fine of Rs 30,500 on each of the convicts, failing which they would have to serve jail term for three more months.

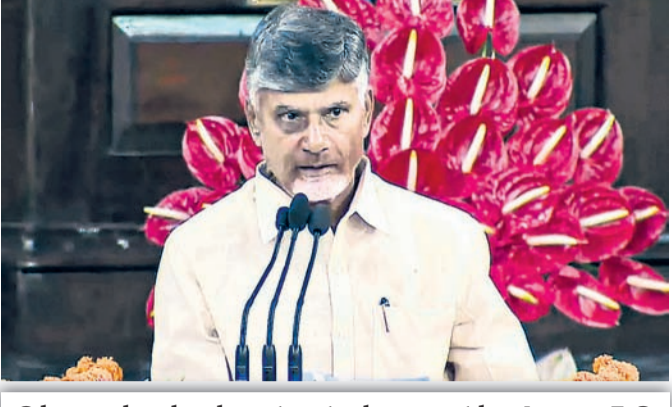
Modi right leader at right time: Naidu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 7: Key BJP allies - TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar - Friday endorsed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the leader of the National Democratic Alliance with a message to balance regional aspirations and national interests.

Speaking at the NDA Parliamentary Party meeting here, BJP allies JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy, Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde, NCP chief Ajit Pawar, HAM(S) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi among others supported the proposal moved by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to elect Modi as the leader of the NDA. The meeting in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, the old Parliament House, saw a lot of bonhomie as well as lighter moments among the leaders with Shinde describing the alliance as a "Fevicol bond", Kumar trying to touch the feet of Modi, who stopped him midway and the Prime Minister patting Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on his shoulder.

LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan, who repeatedly referred to Modi as 'Sir' while supporting the resolution, received a warm embrace from the prime minister. Jana Sena Party Pawan Kalyan received a special mention in Modi's speech when he said that "Pawan was not wind but a storm".



Chandrababu to take oath June 12

Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh): TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu will be sworn in as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh for the third time June 12, party sources said Friday. Naidu will take oath of office at Kesarapalli IT Park near the Gannavaram airport. "At 11:27 am June 12 (Wednesday), Chandrababu Naidu will be sworn in as the Chief Minister at Kesarapalli IT Park near Gannavaram airport," the sources told PTI. Naidu first became the CM nearly 30 years ago in 1995 and went on to rule till 2004 to be replaced by late Y S Rajasekhara Reddy. After a decade and the bifurcation of the united state into Telangana and residual Andhra Pradesh, Naidu had emerged as the first CM of the newly carved out state in 2014.

Developed - Aspirational India) has chosen our Prime Minister for a historic third term, Shri Narendra Modi ji!" NDA coalition partners Kumar and Naidu wholeheartedly praised Modi for his leadership and also reminded him not to ignore the development of states. "Balancing regional aspirations and national interests must run parallelly while ensuring holistic development for all strata of society," Naidu said. Naidu said Modi's rallies in Andhra Pradesh helped the TDP

Shashi Tharoor bats for Rahul as LoP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 7: Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor Friday hailed Rahul Gandhi as "the man of the match" of the Lok Sabha polls and said it would be fitting that he takes on the mantle of the Leader of Opposition in the Lower House. In an interview with PTI after his fourth-straight Lok Sabha polls victory, Tharoor said the message of the mandate was that the electorate have given a "comeuppance" to the BJP's "overweening arrogance" and its "my way or the high way attitude".



"It will be a challenge for Mr (Narendra) Modi and Amit Shah who have not been used to consulting very much in running their government and I think this is going to test their ability to change their way of functioning and be more accommodative and more conciliatory within the government and also I hope with the Opposition," Tharoor said on the incoming coalition government of the NDA. The former Union minister said this time the Modi-led NDA government could prove to be

a 'majboor sarkaar' (helpless government) on some issues because the parties that are part of the NDA will have to agree on everything. "Already we have questions being raised by one party on the Agniveer scheme, saying that it needs to be reviewed and they have been supported by a second party namely the JD(U) and Chirag Paswan. Both in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, there are leaders who have demanded special category status for their states which the BJP government had hitherto refused to grant, that will have to be re-examined," he said. Tharoor said suddenly now there will have to be a more consensual model governance coming up. He accused the Modi government of treating Parliament like a notice board in the last 10 years and expecting it to be a rubber stamp for all their decisions which, he said, was not viable now with a robust opposition of more than 230 MPs.

Batting for Rahul Gandhi to take on the mantle of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Tharoor said the former Congress president was unquestionably the star of this Lok Sabha performance. Using cricketing analogies, Tharoor further said Gandhi was "unquestionably, indeed the man of the match" of the polls and in a number of places the Congress "hit the ball out of the park".



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and state Minister for Water Resources Roshy Augustine during the release of LDF government's progress report of its achievements in 2023-24 in Thiruvananthapuram

CBI files supplementary chargesheet against Kavitha

KAVITHA IS CURRENTLY IN JUDICIAL CUSTODY (JC) IN THE CASE. SHE IS ALSO IN JUDICIAL CUSTODY IN A RELATED MONEY LAUNDERING CASE FILED BY THE ED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 7: The CBI Friday filed a supplementary charge sheet in a Delhi court against BRS leader K Kavitha in the corruption case linked to

the alleged excise scam, claiming there was sufficient evidence to prosecute her in the matter. The central probe agency filed the final report before Special CBI Judge Kaveri Baweja, who will take cognisance of the matter July 6.

The judge also extended the judicial custody of Kavitha, a member of the Telangana Legislative Council, till June 21 in the case. The charge sheet was filed under relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. The agency also said in its re-



port that the investigation was still going on and it may file another supplementary charge sheet in the matter. The daughter of former

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao was arrested by the CBI Tihar Jail in April, where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case related to the alleged scam. The ED arrested Kavitha (46) from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad March 15, and she was in judicial custody in the case. Kavitha is currently in judicial custody (JC) in both the cases. CBI officials had questioned Kavitha inside the prison after obtaining permission from a special court.

Rural vote fall cost Modi a decisive election win

REUTERS

New Delhi, June 7: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party lost a third of its rural parliamentary constituencies in last month's election, a voter analysis shows, reflecting discontent in the countryside over lack of jobs and high inflation. The Bharatiya Janata Party's poor showing in the vast heartland cost the ruling party its majority in Parliament, forcing Modi to depend on regional allies to muster the simple majority required to govern the world's most populous country. The BJP, which held 201 rural constituencies in the 543-member parliament, retained only 126 of them in the mammoth

election, the analysis showed. The seats do not include those in the regions of Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, as a reorientation of constituencies there meant there is no direct comparison with data from the prior election. Rahul Verma, a political expert at the New Delhi-based Centre For Policy Research, said Modi's party especially lost ground in the big heartland states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, which have trailed more prosperous southern and western parts of India in the pace of economic development. "The rural distress would have played a factor," he said. Under Modi, India has become one of the world's fastest-growing



economies, but there are too few jobs for the millions entering the workforce each year and growth has been uneven. Families in rural India, home to 60% of its 1.4 billion people, have seen incomes halve as they also struggle to keep up with rising costs and fewer jobs. Modi campaigned on his track record of rapid

growth, government programmes to help the poor and muscular Hindu nationalism aimed at the party's conservative base. But the results showed the BJP ceding ground in the country's 344 rural or semi-rural seats to the opposition that targeted employment, inflation and income disparity as core issues. "Perhaps BJP was confident before the elections, that's why it did not make any major announcements for the rural parts in its interim budget, and that could have played a role," Verma added. The unemployment rate rose to 8.1% in April from 7.4% in March, private think-tank Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy has said. The figure was at 6% before the COVID-19

pandemic. The BJP has acknowledged employment was a factor in the election and said "whatever best can be done is being done". Its vote share in the 126 seats the BJP managed to retain dropped about three percentage points. Modi's average margin of victory in those seats fell to 15.6% in this election from 22.9% in 2019. Meanwhile in 179 urban seats, the BJP managed to hold on to 78 of the 90 it had won in the last election. Voters were worried about inflation, unemployment, decreasing income and the government's handling of corruption and fraud, according to the Lokniti-CSDS post-election survey published by the Hindu newspaper.



# national



**Politics is about principles, Constitution, progress, development, planning, industry and investment. But the politics you (BJP) are doing about mangalsutra, Hindu, Muslim, temple-mosque. The young generation and most people do not like it... I think the BJP must have understood this**

**SACHIN PILOT** | CONGRESS LEADER

## INDIA SEES HOTTEST MAY

Heatwaves like those experienced in India this May are nearly 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than the country's previously recorded hottest heatwaves. The analysts at ClimaMeter said the intense and prolonged heat wave India endured in May was a result of the naturally occurring El Nino phenomenon (unusual warming of the ocean surface) and the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.



## of the day quote

The NDA family has grown due to Modi's leadership, efficiency and vision. Since the time of Atalji, the NDA has been identified as a family that upholds coalition dhrama

**RAJNATH SINGH** | SENIOR BJP LEADER

We believe that all our candidates who could not win due to the BJP's administrative scams are actually winners. The basis of whatever votes the BJP has received is not the votes of the people, but their administrative system and their scams

**AKHILESH YADAV** | SP CHIEF

The offer of Devendra Fadnavis to resign as deputy chief minister over the BJP's poor performance in the state was not discussed at the NDA meeting in Delhi

**AJIT PAWAR** | DEPUTY CM, MAHARASHTRA

## X POST OF THE DAY

'Parliament Productivity' is not a mere measure of how many minutes/hours Parliament functioned without disruptions but how effective the Opposition benches held the party in power accountable.

**ARVINDGUNASEKAR**

## SHORT TAKES

### 15 kids rescued

**Noida:** Fifteen children who were engaged in works at eateries, furniture shops, hotels etc were rescued in Noida Thursday in a child labour eradication campaign, police said. The campaign was led by the Anti Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) of the police department in coordination with NGOs Sahyog (Care For You) and Young India, according to an official statement. "During the campaign, a total of 15 children who were found engaged in child labour in hotels, dhabas, furniture shops and other places in Sector 49, Baraula, Sector 76 area of Noida were rescued," the police said. Child labour in India is primarily prohibited under the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.

### Diarrhoea outbreak

**Hamirpur (HP):** Thirty-four new diarrhoea cases were reported from 10 villages of Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur in a span of 24 hours, taking the total number of patients in the district to 286, an official said Friday. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr R K Agnihotri said the 34 cases were detected till Thursday night. Of the total 286 cases, 14 patients are in hospital while 193 have been discharged. The remaining patients are getting treated at home, he told PTI. Twelve villages of Gram Panchayats Lamblu, Chammed, Gasota, Bafirin and Pandher in Hamirpur district have been reporting diarrhoea cases since last Friday.

### Mishap claims 3

**Sultanpur:** Three persons travelling in an e-rickshaw died Friday after a speeding Scorpio hit the divider and fell on the vehicle on Lucknow-Varanasi National Highway here, police said. A middle-aged man passenger on the e-rickshaw died on the spot. Two others, including the e-rickshaw driver, sustained severe injuries, they said.

## KANGANA RANAUT SLAPGATE

# Farmers' bodies support CISF cop

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, June 7:** Some farmer outfits Friday threw their weight behind the CISF woman constable who allegedly slapped actor and BJP MP-elect Kangana Ranaut, saying the entire sequence leading to the incident needs to be properly investigated.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha are among the prominent outfits which said they stand in support of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) constable.

The Mohali Police has booked Constable Kulwinder Kaur under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), both are bailable offences.

No arrest has been made yet, they said and added that the FIR in case was registered on a complaint from the CISF.

Ranaut, in a video message, had Thursday said she was hit in the face and abused by the constable during security check at the Chandigarh airport, the ugly fracas breaking out two days after she was elected to the



Lok Sabha from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh.

The constable, who appeared to be upset with Ranaut over her stance on the farmers' protests, has been suspended and an investigation has been launched. The CISF, tasked with providing security at airports, had also ordered a court of inquiry into the incident.

SKM (Non-Political) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher met Punjab's Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav in the afternoon for a proper investigation into the

matter. "The main issue which we raised is that there should be no injustice to the constable. We have been assured that investigations are being held in an impartial manner," Dallewal said after the meeting.

Mohali Police SHO (Airport) Inspector Periwinkle Grewal said the matter is under investigation.

In a meeting, CISF officials gave those from the Mohali police information regarding the incident, another police official told reporters. He added that footage from CCTV cameras are being scanned and after that the

next course of action will be taken.

Earlier in the day, while addressing a press conference here with Pandher and some other farmer leaders, Dallewal said, "We will demand a proper investigation and we will tell him that there should be no injustice with the woman constable."

In a video statement titled "Shocking rise in terror and violence in Punjab" posted on X after she landed in Delhi after the incident Thursday, Ranaut said she was safe and fine.

Another video doing the rounds of social media had shown the agitated constable talking to people presumably after the incident.

"Kangana made a statement (earlier) that farmers were protesting in Delhi because they were paid Rs 100 or Rs 200. At the time, my mother was one of the protesters," she said in the purported video.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher alleged that Ranaut had hurt sentiments with her comments against farmers, elderly women and Punjabis in the past. So the constable is not to be blamed, she was doing her duty, he said.

## LAND FOR JOBS SCAM

# CBI files chargesheet against Lalu, 77 others



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 7:** The CBI Friday filed its final charge sheet against former railway minister Lalu Prasad in connection with the land for jobs scam in which his family allegedly received land parcels from ineligible candidates appointed in various Railways zones as 'substitutes', the officials said.

Upon conclusion of the investigation, the CBI submitted its third and final charge sheet before special judge (MP/MLA Cases) here against 78 accused, including Lalu Prasad, his wife Rabri Devi, son Tej Pratap Yadav who has been charge sheeted for the first time, daughter Hema Yadav, former OSD Bhola Yadav and one former staff member of the RJD chief, they said.

Tej Pratap Yadav has been charge sheeted for the first time.

The CBI has invoked IPC sections related to criminal conspiracy along with cheating and forgery among others, and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act against the accused.

The list of accused included 29 Railways officials, 37 candidates and six other private persons, they said.

During the investigation, the CBI found that Lalu Prasad, in

furtherance of a criminal conspiracy along with officers of Railways, his family members and others, engaged candidates as Group D substitutes in 11 zones of Indian Railways in complete violation of the extant guidelines, the CBI spokesperson said.

He said this was done in return for the transfer of land by the candidate himself or his family members.

The candidates also submitted fake educational certificates to become eligible for these positions, they said.

"Candidates who were engaged as substitutes in different zones of Railways were mainly from the districts which were the constituencies of then Union railway minister and his family members since long," the spokesperson said in a statement.

The CBI had charge sheeted the then deputy chief minister of Bihar and Lalu Prasad's son Tejashwi Yadav in the case July 3 last year.

The agency had registered the case May 18, 2022 against Lalu Prasad and 15 others including his wife, two daughters and unidentified public servants and private persons.

The CBI had filed the first charge sheet in the case in October, 2022.

## SNIPPETS

### Swati Maliwal assault case: Court rejects bail plea of Bibhav Kumar

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi sessions court Friday dismissed the bail application of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar, saying there was an apprehension about the accused influencing witnesses, if released. Kumar has been accused of assaulting AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal May 13 at the chief minister's official residence. Kumar had moved the court for bail for a second time. Judge Ekta Gauba Mann said "...The investigation is at initial stage and there is fear in the mind of victim regarding her security as well as security of her family members as she is receiving continuous threats. There is also every apprehension that applicant or accused Bibhav Kumar would influence the witnesses, if at liberty." "So, I do not find any merit in the present bail application," the judge added while dismissing the plea. Kumar was sent to 14 days judicial custody May 31.

### Asia's 1st loco pilot to attend Modi's oath ceremony

**NEW DELHI:** Asia's first loco pilot, Surekha Yadav, will attend the oath-taking ceremony of Narendra Modi as prime minister for a third term, an official from the Central Railway said Friday. Yadav, who is piloting the Vande Bharat train from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus-Solapur, is among ten loco pilots invited for the ceremony slated to be held June 9 in New Delhi, the official said. Hailing from Satara in the western Maharashtra region, Yadav became India's first female train driver in 1988. She has won many awards at the state and national levels so far for her achievements. She is the first woman loco pilot of the semi-high speed Vande Bharat Express plying between Solapur and CSMT in Mumbai.

## Seven Naxalites killed in encounter



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Narayanpur, June 7:** Seven Naxalites were killed and three jawans injured in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district Friday, police said.

The gunfight took place at around 3pm in a forest near Gobel and Thulthuli villages in Orcha area, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, a senior police official said.

Personnel belonging to the police's District Reserve Guard from Narayanpur, Kondagaon, Dantewada and Bastar districts and the 45th battalion of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) were involved in the operation, he said. After guns fell silent, bodies of seven Naxalites in uniform and some weapons were recovered from the spot, he said.

Three jawans were also injured in the gun battle, he said, adding a search operation was underway in the area. With this incident, 125 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters with security forces in the state so far this year.



BJP workers celebrate after senior party leader Narendra Modi was elected as the leader of the NDA Parliamentary Party, at Balurghat, in South Dinajpur district, West Bengal

# Uttarakhand trekking tragedy amid inclement weather

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, June 7:** Shocked, shattered and depressed, the survivors of the trekking tragedy in Uttarakhand sat for nearly 36 hours with the bodies of their nine companions, S Srivatsa, Secretary of Karnataka Mountaineering Association, said while recalling the sight at the Dehradun hospital the survivors were taken to.

"When I spoke to them, they (trekkers) recalled how because of the heavy wind, their windcheater, jackets and gloves were flying and visibility was zero. So, they took shelter next to a big boulder. But because of exhaustion, hypothermia and lack of sufficient oxygen, four of them collapsed at first. Five others collapsed later."

"They said they were unable to move, caught in the blizzard, and became exhausted. They were carrying food but could not eat because they were unable to open the tiffin boxes amid



Tributes being paid at the mortal remains of trekkers

strong winds," he told PTI. Later, from the lower camp, a guide and other mountaineers sent two more tents with sleeping bags and a cook managed to give them some hot water, he said while narrating the sequence of events post-tragedy.

"With that help, (the rest of them) survived. Otherwise, they would have also collapsed," he

added. Among those who lost their lives was 71-year-old Asha Sudhakar, a KMA member for over three decades and one of the oldest women trekkers from the state. According to KM she had been on several such treks with her husband S Sudhakar in the past, who was the team leader of this trek. He survived the calamity. The group comprised

physically fit, experienced trekkers in the age group of 34 to 71, Srivatsa said. "This tragedy happened only due to this fatal bad weather. They were all trained and experienced trekkers. It was not very tough terrain also. The terrain was very accessible to any common person..." he added.

He said he rushed to Dehradun as soon as he heard about what happened. "I know each one of them personally. They all are KMA members and I have trekked a lot with them in the past but during this trek, I was in Nepal." Recalling what he saw at the hospital, he said, "They were in complete shock, shattered and depressed. Some of them were sitting with the bodies of their team members for nearly 36 hours. It was depressing." "This itinerary was from May 29 to 8. They (trekkers) left May 29 and were supposed to reach Bangalore June 8," he said.

Talking about the sequence of events before the tragedy,

Srivatsa said after reaching Uttarakashi, the group established a camp at Sahastra Tal. From there, they went to a high point, but while climbing down, the weather turned bad.

Due to bad weather June 3, they all took shelter at the big boulder. Due to intense cold and inclement weather, people went into hypothermia and four of them collapsed at night and the next morning, a few of them (trekkers) came down with the guide, he said.

"After the guide reached the nearest signal point, he called me on the evening of June 4, and with the help of the Secretary of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, we organised logistics for rescue June 5," he said.

The Chief Secretary of Karnataka and the Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand both coordinated and helped us, he added.

All nine bodies have arrived and been handed over to their respective families for final rites.

## Rahul Gandhi gets bail in defamation case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, June 7:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Friday was granted bail by a special court here in connection with a case filed by the BJP's Karnataka unit for issuing defamatory advertisements in mainstream newspapers.

The advertisement ahead of the Assembly polls last year accused the then BJP government in the state of indulging in large-scale corruption during its 2019-2023 rule.

The court had granted bail to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar June, who is also the State Congress chief, after they appeared before it in connection with the defamation case.

Judge K N Shivakumar had directed Gandhi to appear before the court June seven without fail.

Gandhi apologised to the court Friday for seeking exemption from personal appearance in the last two hearings. The court accepted his apology and granted him bail on a surety of Rs 75 lakh.

Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar were also present in the court along with Gandhi.

The BJP had in its complaint filed in June 2023 alleged that false and reckless allegations were made in the advertisements issued by the accused persons May 5, 2023 in all the mainstream newspapers in Karnataka during campaigning for the Assembly polls, under the title Corruption rate card, and 40 per cent Commission Sarkara (government).



# international

## of the day quote

It outrages me when someone who has sought protection here commits the most serious crimes. Such criminals should be deported, even if they come from Syria and Afghanistan

Understanding the needs of the country, and appreciating the express will of the people, the NEC has agreed to seek agreement amongst parties on the formation of a government of national unity

I don't think the US-India relationship is going to be impacted in any dramatic way. The area that we've actually seen the most progress is the US-India military ties. I don't suspect under a coalition arrangement, you're going to see a dramatic change

## SHORT TAKES

### Netanyahu set to address US Cong

Washington: Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he will "present the truth" about the war against Hamas in Gaza when he addresses the US Congress July 24 during a visit to Washington, Republican leaders said Thursday. "I am very moved to have the privilege of representing Israel before both Houses of Congress and to present the truth about our just war against those who seek to destroy us to the representatives of the American people and the entire world," Netanyahu said in the statement.

### Russian warships to dock in Havana

Havana: Four Russian ships, including a nuclear-powered submarine, will arrive in Havana next week, Cuban officials said Thursday, citing "historically friendly relations" between both nations and as tensions escalate over Western military support for Ukraine in its war with Russia. Cuba's foreign ministry said in a news release that the ships will be in Havana between June 12 and June 17, noting that none of them will carry any nuclear weapons and assuring their presence "does not represent a threat to the region."

### Biden rules out pardon for son

Wilmington: US President Joe Biden says he won't pardon his son Hunter if he's convicted in his federal gun trial. Biden was speaking to ABC News from Normandy France, where he's commemorating the anniversary of D-Day. The White House has said in the past that Biden would not pardon Hunter, but he was asked in an interview Thursday whether he would accept the outcome of his son's trial, and he said: "Yes," according to ABC.

### 22 Chinese jailed

Lusaka: A Zambian court Friday jailed 22 Chinese nationals over cybercrimes that included internet fraud and online scams targeting Zambians and other people from Singapore, Peru and the UAE. The Magistrates Court in the capital, Lusaka, jailed them for periods ranging from 7 to 11 years. The court also fined them between \$1,500 to \$3,000 after they pleaded guilty to charges of computer-related misrepresentation, identity fraud and illegally operating a network or service.



Ukraine has the right to self defence. The right to self defence also includes the right to hit legitimate, military targets on the territory of the attacking party, the aggressor, in this case Russia

JENS STOLTENBERG | NATO SECRETARY GENERAL

### SUNITA ENTERS ISS

Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams broke into an impromptu dance as she entered the International Space Station (ISS). Williams, 58, flew to space for the third time Wednesday along with Wilmore, 61, scripting history as the first members aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft to the ISS



# Watery grave for 4 Indian students

Worst tragedy to hit the Indian student community in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, June 7: Four Indian medical students drowned when they entered a fast-flowing river near St Petersburg in Russia, authorities said Friday, in the worst tragedy to hit the Indian student community in the country.

The four students from Maharashtra - Harshal Anantrao Desale, Jishan Ashpak Pinjari, Jia Firoj Pinjari and Malik Gulamgous Mohammad Yakub, were studying at the Novgorod State University in Veliky Novgorod city. A fifth student, Nisha Bhupesh Sonawane, was rescued.

The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi termed it an unfortunate incident.

"Four Indian students who were studying at the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University located in Veliky Novgorod, Russia, drowned in an unfortunate incident in the Volkhov river. In the incident, a fifth Indian student was saved from drowning and is presently receiving medical attention," it said.

Local emergency services have so far recovered two dead bodies from the Volkhov River. The search for the remaining two missing students continues.

Local media reports said that the students drowned as they tried to save one of their female friends. They all were aged 18-20.

Jishan and Jia hailed from Amalner in the Jalgaon district of Maharashtra. Harshal Desale belonged to Bhadgaon, also in the Jalgaon district.

Jalgaon district collector Ayush Prasad said arrangements are being made to bring the bodies to India. "We are working to



### Siblings' video call with family moments before drowning

The Pinjari family faced a devastating turn of events as siblings Jishan and Jia were swept away with two others by a strong wave in the Volkhov river in Russia. In a heart-wrenching moment, captured on video as Jishan made a call to his family, the family witnessed the siblings being swept away by a powerful wave despite desperate pleas for them to exit the water. A family member shared with local media, "When they entered the Volkhov river, Jishan made a video call to his family. His father and other family members were pleading with Jishan and others to come out of the river waters when a strong wave swept them away." The Pinjari family now grapples with the aftermath of this tragic incident, highlighting the dangers that can unexpectedly arise in seemingly peaceful settings.

send the bodies to the relatives as soon as possible. Proper treatment is also being provided to the student whose life has been saved," the Embassy of India in Moscow said on X.

The Consulate General of India in St Petersburg said these students were pursuing medical education at Veliky Novgorod State University.

"Sincere condolences to the bereaved families," it posted on X.

## DRAGON'S DISTURBANCE

### Philippines accuses China of blocking medical evacuation

MANILA: The Philippine coast guard Friday accused its Chinese counterpart of blocking efforts to evacuate a sick member of its armed forces in the South China Sea, calling its actions "barbaric and inhumane". The incident, which the Philippines said took place last month, involved a member of a small contingent of marines posted to guard the BRP Sierra Madre, a Philippine vessel grounded at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, the site of repeated confrontations with China this past year. Coast Guard spokesperson Jay Tarriela said coast guard and navy boats were harassed by Chinese vessels, despite having informed them the operation was of a medical nature. "The barbaric and inhumane behaviour displayed by the China Coast Guard has no place in our society," Tarriela said in a statement.



### Japan levels against China for entering into disputed island

TOKYO: Japan lodged a protest against Beijing Friday after four armed Chinese coastguard vessels entered waters that Tokyo considers its territory. The Japanese government said it was the first time that four Chinese vessels carrying what appeared to be cannons had entered its territorial waters in the East China Sea surrounding the disputed islands, which Tokyo calls the Senkaku and Beijing calls the Diaoyu. "I am not in a position to state what the Chinese side's intentions are, but the intrusion of vessels belonging to China's coastguard into (our) territory is a breach of international law," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told a press conference.



# Taiwan reacts to China's protest over 'cordial exchange' with Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 7: Taiwan Friday said China's "outrage" over a "cordial exchange" between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te is utterly unjustified as threats and intimidation never fosters friendship.

The comments by the Taiwanese Foreign Ministry came a day after China protested an exchange of messages between Modi and Ching-te, saying it opposes all official interactions between Taiwan and countries having diplomatic relations with Beijing.

"China's outrage at a cordial exchange between the leaders of 2 democracies is utterly unjustified. Threats & intimidation never foster friendships," the Taiwanese foreign ministry said on X.

"Taiwan remains dedicated to building partnerships with #India underpinned by mutual benefit & shared values," it said.

### 'UTTERLY UNJUSTIFIED'



On Wednesday, Lai greeted Modi on the National Democratic Alliance's victory in the Lok Sabha polls and said Taiwan was looking forward to enhancing the "fast-growing" ties between the two sides.

"My sincere congratulations to Prime Minister @narendramodi on his election victory. We look forward to enhancing the fast-growing Taiwan-India partnership, expanding our collaboration on trade, technology & other sectors to contribute to peace & prosperity in the IndoPacific," he said on X.

In his response to the congratulatory message, Modi said: "Thank you @ChingteLai for

# Israel-Gaza conflict enters 9th month



Israel's retaliatory military offensive against Hamas has killed at least 36,654 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians

AGENCIES

Gaza, June 7: Israeli strikes hammered a Gaza refugee camp Friday after a deadly strike on a UN-run school, as the war sparked by Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel entered its ninth month.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands, laid waste to much of the Gaza Strip, uprooted most of its 2.4 million population and put them at risk of starvation.

Diplomatic efforts to mediate the first ceasefire since a week-long pause in November appear to have stalled, only a week after US President Joe Biden offered a new three-stage roadmap.

Hamas, which has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007, has yet to respond to Biden's proposal. Israel has expressed openness to discussions while insisting on pursuing its war aim of destroying the Palestinian Islamist group.

STRIKES ACROSS GAZA The United States, which provides Israel with \$3.8 billion in

annual military aid, urged its ally to be "fully" transparent about the strike.

"The government of Israel has said that they are going to release more information about this strike, including the names of those who died in it. We expect them to be fully transparent in making that information public," said State Department spokesman Matthew Miller.

Israel accuses Hamas and its allies in Gaza of using schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure including facilities run by UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, as operational centres, charges the militants deny.

ISRAELI ISOLATION The war was sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack, which resulted in the deaths of 1,194 people, mostly civilians.

Militants also took 251 hostages, 120 of whom remain in Gaza, including 41 the army says are dead. Israel's retaliatory military offensive has killed at least 36,654 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Israel has faced growing diplomatic isolation, with international court cases accusing it of war crimes and several European countries recognising a Palestinian state.

# Jailed Khan invokes Kejriwal's example before Pakistan SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, June 7: Jailed former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has invoked the case of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal getting bail to campaign ahead of India's general elections, as he complained before the Supreme Court about the mistreatment meted to him in jail.

During his appearance Thursday before a five-member Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa in a case related to amendments to the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman complained of the "victimisation" that he faced since his ouster from power in April 2022.

Justices Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Athar Minallah, and Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi also sat on the bench.

Justice Minallah remarked that it was unfortunate that Khan was in jail as he was the head of a large party with millions of followers.

Khan, complaining of oppression against him, pointed out that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was released on bail by the apex court ahead of the Indian general elections for campaigning for his party but he was facing oppression in Pakistan which was under undeclared martial law.

Khan, 71, complained that he was convicted within five days to keep him away from the general elections which were held February 8.

Khan also expressed dismay over the Supreme Court's judgment rejecting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's government plea requesting the live streaming of the case.

"You wrote [in the judgment] that I did political point scoring during the last hearing. I did not get it, what political scoring did I resort to?" the PTI founder asked the CJP Isa.

At this, Chief Justice Isa said a judge does not owe an explanation to anyone over the verdict. "You can file a review petition," the top judge said.

# Migrants traverse California desert to reach US

SO FAR THIS FISCAL YEAR, THERE HAVE BEEN OVER 1.16 MILLION MIGRANT APPREHENSIONS BORDER WIDE IN US

REUTERS

Jacumba Hot Springs, June 7: Propped up against the rusty steel slats of the border wall, migrant families who hours before crossed the US-Mexico border rest under tarps and tents and await Border Patrol officers.

Some of the families along this remote desert stretch in San Diego County have brought their children with them, including small infants.

In recent months, the San Diego-Mexico border has become one of the busiest crossings for migrants seeking safe haven and opportunities in the United States.

In May, Reuters reporters came across Colombians, Ecuadoreans, Peruvians, Turks, Brazilians, Jordanians, Egyptians, Indians and Chinese - a more varied mix



than the Mexicans and Central Americans who formed the bulk of migrants in years past.

The high volume of crossings has ignited a political firestorm for President Joe Biden as the Democrat seeks re-election in November. And

they have provided Republicans and their likely presidential candidate Donald Trump with plenty of ammunition to criticize Biden's immigration policy.

The Biden administration is hoping the numbers of mi-

grants crossing will drop following the announcement this week of a broad asylum ban that would deny migrants caught crossing illegally the right to claim asylum.

The Biden administration said high rates of border arrests has triggered the measures, which took effect immediately but include exceptions for unaccompanied children, people who face serious medical or safety threats and victims of trafficking.

In April, close to 30% of all the Border Patrol arrests across the US-Mexico border were in the San Diego sector, US

Biden's new policy blocks migrants from claiming asylum at the US-Mexico border until attempted crossings fall

Customs and Border Protection data showed. So far this fiscal year, which began in October, there have been more than 1.16 million migrant apprehensions border wide.

The many Colombians here say their country has become too dangerous and they have received threats against their lives.

Down the fence, groups of migrants travel to a hilly, boulder-covered area where there is a break in the border fence. They clamber around the fence and then head off to areas where they will be picked up by Border Patrol.

Most migrants walk to open-air sites, and in the afternoon, they are lined up and a Border Patrol agent takes pictures of their documents and faces and loads them into buses to take them to a processing center.

of the day quote

Reduced political stability and the need for consensus building that is inherent with coalition government might erode investor confidence in the near term

India is becoming a hub of electric mobility for the global market, and such collaborations are a testament to our efforts in this direction

TCS AI WisdomNext helps our customers take advantage of GenAI to unlock the full potential of their data, drive greater business innovation and efficiency, and gain a competitive edge

SHORT TAKES

Torrent mcap rises 2X to \$20bn in a yr

Mumbai: Diversified Torrent Group crossed \$20 billion (Rs 1.68 lakh crore) in market capitalisation Friday, nearly doubling the market value on the back of robust growth across businesses spanning from pharma to energy.

Adani to invest over \$1bn in SL

New Delhi: Adani Group plans to invest over \$1 billion in setting up projects in Sri Lanka to generate electricity from wind in what would be the island nation's single largest foreign direct investment and the biggest ever power project, sources said.



The digital economy along with emerging technologies like AI and the rise of data centres are key to Indian growth

SUNIL BARTH WAL | COMMERCE SECRETARY

AMAZON EYES MX PLAYERS' ASSETS

US technology firm Amazon has signed an agreement to acquire some of the assets of Times Internet's video entertainment platform MX Players in an estimated \$80-100 million deal, according to sources.



RBI sticks to hawkish line

CENTRAL BANK KEEPS INTEREST RATES UNCHANGED FOR EIGHTH TIME IN A ROW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 7: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) left its key interest rates unchanged Friday as expected, keeping the focus on inflation amid robust economic growth that is likely to provide the new Modi government headroom for manoeuvring reforms.

The Monetary Policy Committee, consisting of three RBI and an equal number of external members, kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent for an eighth straight policy meeting and stuck to its relatively hawkish stance of "withdrawal of accommodation", Governor Shaktikanta Das said in his statement.

However, there were signs of a more divided policy committee, with one additional member voting for a softening in stance as well as policy direction. Two external members, Ashima Goyal and Jayanth Varma, voted for a cut, compared to one in the previous meeting.

The decision comes just days ahead of Narendra Modi assuming the office of the Prime Minister of India for the third straight time but with a smaller-than-expected election victory that forced his party BJP to share power in a coalition government.

The slim majority, according

HIGHLIGHTS

- Key interest rate (repo) remains unchanged at 6.5%
Growth projection for FY25 raised to 7.2% from 7%
Inflation forecast for FY25 retained at 4.5%
Food inflation still remains a concern
CAD for FY25 expected to remain well within sustainable level



- Export and import regulations under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) to be rationalized
RBI to set up Digital Payments Intelligence Platform to harness advanced technologies to mitigate payment fraud risks
Auto replenishment of balance Fastag, NCMC, and UPI-Lite wallets brought under the e-mandate framework
The next monetary policy announcement August 8
Bulk deposit threshold raised to ₹3 crore from ₹2 crore

It (inflation) has to align with the target and once it reaches 4 per cent, it has to stay there. When we will get confidence that this will stay at 4 per cent and will not go up, then we will think about further monetary policy actions

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

of disinflation. "Monetary policy must continue to remain disinflationary and be resolute in its commitment to aligning inflation to the target of 4.0 per cent on a durable basis," he said.

The RBI, he said, will continue to be nimble and flexible in its liquidity management through fine-tuning operations in repo and reverse repo. "We will deploy an appropriate mix of

instruments to modulate both frictional and durable liquidity so as to ensure that money market interest rates evolve in an orderly manner, which preserves financial stability."

The governor hinted that the RBI may be willing to move before the US Federal Reserve pivots a rate cut, saying the central bank's monetary policy actions are determined by domestic growth and inflation conditions.

Voices for interest rate cut within RBI's rate-setting panel growing

"I'd like to unambiguously state while we do keep a watch on whether clouds are building up or clearing out in the distance horizons, we play the game according to the local weather pitch conditions," he said.

Among other decisions, the

INDIA INC REACTS

We now see the RBI cutting rates starting October and have lowered our expectation to two rate cuts against three foreseen earlier

DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI | CHIEF ECONOMIST, CRISIL

We are expecting inflation trajectory to stabilise within the target band of RBI and thereafter softening of the policy stance of the monetary policy

SANJEEV AGRAWAL | PRESIDENT, PHD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Domestic growth inflation outlook has moved favourably with inflation moving below 4 per cent in Q2

DINESH KHARA | CHAIRMAN, SBI

In the next monetary policy RBI should look toward cutting the repo rates for the first time since February 2023, and offer lower lending rates that would boost consumer spending even more

ROMAN IRANI | PRESIDENT, CREDAI

Forex reserves jump to new all-time high of \$651.51 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 7: India's forex reserves jumped \$4.837 billion to a new all-time high of \$651.51 billion for the week ended May 31, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped \$2.027 billion to \$646.673 billion.

"Touching a new milestone, India's foreign exchange reserves reached a historical high of \$651.51 billion as on May 31," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said in his statement while announcing the bimonthly policy review.

The previous high for the kitty a crucial guard against any disturbances in the external sector was \$648.87 billion May 10.

For the week ended May 31, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$5,065.51 billion to \$572,564 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves decreased \$212 million to \$56,501 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down \$17 million to \$18.118 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was up \$1 million to \$4,326 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

SNIPPETS

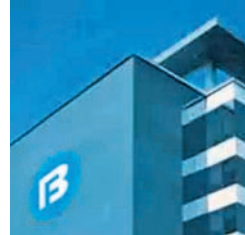
ICICI Bank faces pushback against delisting brokerage unit

Mumbai: ICICI Bank is facing pushback against delisting its unit ICICI Securities, with some shareholders trying to block the move and the market regulator hauling the bank up over its processes to win shareholder approval.



Bajaj Housing Finance approves public offering to raise ₹40bn

Bangalore: Bajaj Housing Finance approved to file for an initial public offering (IPO) with a fresh issue of shares worth ₹40 billion (\$479.2 million) Thursday. The firm, a unit of non-banking finance company (NBFC) Bajaj Finance said the IPO would include a sale of shares by existing shareholders.



Investors' wealth soars ₹28.65L-cr in three days

BENCHMARKS RECOVER FROM ELECTION SLUMP TO TOUCH RECORD LEVELS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 7: Investors' wealth has soared by ₹28.65 lakh crore in the three-day rally to Friday in the stock markets, which saw benchmark Sensex recouping 4,614.31 points or 6.40 per cent to close at a record high.

The sharp rebound in stock markets follows Tuesday's mayhem which wiped out over ₹31 lakh crore of investors' wealth in a single day as markets crashed after poll results lagged its expectations.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,720.8 points or 2.29 per cent to hit a new record peak of 76,795.31 in day trade. The benchmark ended at 76,693.36, up 1,618.85 points or 2.16 per cent.

The NSE Nifty settled with a jump of 468.75 points or 2.05 per cent at 23,290.15.

Following the remarkable recovery in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies went up by ₹28,65,742.36 crore to ₹4,23,49,447.63 crore (\$5.08 trillion) in three days.

"Domestic markets shrugged off weak global cues, as investors

RECOVERY AFTER ROUT



- TOP GAINERS: M&M (5.83), Wipro (5.09), Tech Mahindra (4.50), Infosys (4.13), Tata Steel (4.04)

cheered the RBI's higher growth forecast for FY25 in its credit policy announcement which propelled Sensex to a fresh all-time high above the 76k-mark on massive broad-based buying support.

All the 30 Sensex companies ended in the positive territory on Friday, with Mahindra & Mahindra, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Infosys and Tata Steel emerging as the biggest gainers.

As many as 2,890 stocks advanced while 970 declined and 92 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth

BSE denies tech glitch on June 4

Leading stock exchange BSE Friday said lag in receiving payments from banks led to delay in assigning NAV to investors who bought mutual funds on June 4 and there was no technical glitch at its end. Many investors had complained on social media for failing to square off their positions. Several investors purchased their mutual funds before the cut-off time, although they were assigned the Net Asset Value (NAV), which determines the fund's value for June 5 instead of June 4.

₹6,867.72 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

Retail inflation for industrial workers eases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 7: Retail inflation for industrial workers eased to 3.87 per cent in April compared to 4.2 per cent in March this year, according to official data released Friday.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment released the Consumer Price Index-Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) numbers for February, March and April Friday.

"Year-on-year inflation for the month of March 2024 stood at 4.20% as compared to 5.79% in March 2023," a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, year-on-year inflation for the month of April 2024 stood at 3.87 per cent as compared to 5.09 per cent in April 2023. Year-on-year inflation for the month of February 2024 stood at 4.90 per cent as compared to 6.16 per cent in February, 2023.

The Labour Bureau, an attached office of the Ministry of Labour & Employment, has been



compiling Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers every month on the basis of retail prices collected from 317 markets spread over 88 industrially important centres in the country.

The All-India CPI-IW for February increased by 0.3 point to 139.2 points. The index for March decreased by 0.3 point and stood at 138.9 points.

The All-India CPI-IW for April 2024 increased by 0.5 point and stood at 139.4 (one hundred thirty nine point four).

The CPI-IW is used for fixing dearness allowance employees and dearness relief of pensioners by the government.

In another statement, the ministry also released the All-India Consumer Price Index Numbers

For Agricultural And Rural Labourers for March and April.

"The year on year inflation rates for CPI-AL and CPI-RL in March 2024 were recorded at 7.15% and 7.08%, respectively. In April 2024, the year on year inflation rates for CPI-AL and CPI-RL were registered at 7.03% and 6.96%, respectively," it said.

In March 2024, both the CPI-AL and CPI-RL increased by 1 point, reaching 1259 and 1270, respectively. In April 2024, the CPI-AL rose by 4 points to 1263, while the CPI-RL, increased by 5 points to 1275 points, it stated.

The Labour Bureau, an attached office of the Ministry of Labour & Employment, has been compiling All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) every month on the basis of retail prices collected from 600 villages spread over 20 States.

The indices for the months of March, 2024 and April, 2024 are being released in this press release, it said.

AIRLINE BEHEMOTH

NCLT okays Air India-Vistara merger

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 7: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Thursday approved the merger of Air India and Vistara, paving the way for the creation of one of the world's largest airline groups.

Post-merger, which was announced in November 2022, Singapore Airlines will have a 25.1 per cent stake in Air India. Vistara is a joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Tata Group.

In a 31-page order, the Chandigarh bench of the NCLT approved the "composite scheme of arrangement" involving Talace, Air India and Vistara. All are part of the Tata Group.

Air India expects the merger to be completed by the end of this year.



itors of both airline companies. Moreover, it has also received applicable approvals including that of fair trade regulator the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Besides, "no sustainable objections" have been raised by the Income Tax department or any other interested party.

"Accordingly, a sanction is hereby granted to the 'Composite Scheme of Arrangement' amongst the petitioner companies and their respective shareholders under Sections 230 to 232 and other applicable provisions of the Companies Act,

2013," the NCLT order said. It added that the sanctioned scheme shall be binding on the petitioner companies and their respective shareholders.

"The Transferor Companies (Vistara) shall stand dissolved without undergoing the process of winding up on completion of the merger and associated formalities after receipt of necessary approvals including FDI approval/security clearances as required under relevant CARs (Civil Aviation Regulations) issued by DGCA/MCA/any other authority within a period of nine months from the date of this order," it said.

The order also said the companies shall ensure Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) approval by Singapore Airlines (a shareholder of Vistara) and security clearances as required under relevant CARs from DGCA/MOCA within a time frame of nine months from the date of this order.

