



New beginnings

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal, who were in a long-term relationship, tie the nuptial knot at an intimate function

LEISURE | P2



Drop in US arms

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu tells his Cabinet that there has been a "dramatic drop" in US weapons deliveries for Israel's war effort in Gaza

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Seeking partners

After spending close to \$1.2 billion and seven years of little success, ONGC is seeking partners to rescue the Deen Dayal gas field

BUSINESS | P11



Eves annihilate SA

Indian eves defeat South Africa by 6 wickets in the third ODI to complete a 3-0 series sweep in Bangalore

SPORTS | P12



TOUCHDOWN: ISRO's Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) 'Pushpak' during its final stage of Landing Experiment (LEX), Sunday. The space agency Sunday said it has achieved a third consecutive success in the RLV landing experiment by demonstrating the autonomous landing capability of the launch vehicle under more challenging conditions

Mineral looters will be sent to jail: Majhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Keonjhar, June 23: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday vowed to bring all those involved in the illegal exploitation of mineral resources in Keonjhar to justice.

During his first visit to his hometown Keonjhar since becoming CM, Majhi addressed a public gathering in which he accused the previous BJD government and local administration of facilitating the looting of mineral resources worth thousands of crores.

Not a single person involved in mine exploitation will be spared. They will be sent to jail in Keonjhar and Bhubaneswar, Majhi said. He mentioned how senior BJD leaders had once approached him, offering him a Cabinet position and a mineral block in Keonjhar if he joined their party, and said he refused the offer, emphasising his commitment to his principles and the well-being of the state.

He accused the BJD government of reducing the budget for Keonjhar by nearly ₹2,000 crore annually, despite the district generating substantial funds from mineral resources. Majhi prom-



ised to prioritise the development of Keonjhar, aiming to make it a top district with the co-operation of its residents. Earlier in the day, Majhi reached the Ghatagaon High School helipad at around 10.30am and was accorded a rousing welcome by locals.

Besides leading two roadshows in Keonjhar town, he offered prayers at Maa Tarini temple. The CM also announced another grant of ₹50 crore for development of the shrine and said his government will approach the Central government for a national tourism site tag for the temple.

Majhi is expected to visit his native village Raikala Monday and address a gathering at Jhumpura. The CM is scheduled to return to Bhubaneswar Monday evening.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Let China rename our places. Renaming changes nothing. We know because we do it all the time

Naxals printing notes

In a first, cops seize FICN printed by Naxalites in Chhattisgarh's Sukma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sukma, June 23: Security forces have for the first time recovered a huge cache of fake currency notes belonging to Naxalites and equipment used to print them in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, a senior police official said Sunday.

According to the police, Naxalites were allegedly using the fake currency notes in weekly markets of interior areas of Bastar region for a long time and duping innocent tribals.

Naxalites were also trying to destabilise the Indian economy with this move, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran G Chavan claimed.

The recovery was made Saturday evening on a forested hill near Korajguda village of the district when a joint team of security personnel from various forces was out on a search operation, he said, without specifying the exact face value of the fake currency.

For the first time, fake currency notes belonging to Naxalites have been recovered in the state which has been struggling with the menace for more than three decades, Chavan said terming the seizure as a crucial success in the anti-Naxal operation.

Personnel belonging to the Central Reserve Police Force's



2 CoBRA personnel killed as Maoists blow up truck

Two personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force's jungle warfare unit CoBRA were killed after Naxalites blew up a truck with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Sunday, police said. The Naxal blast took place around 3pm near Timmapuram village between Silger and Tekalgudem camps of security forces, over 400 km from the state capital Raipur, a senior police official said.

50th battalion, District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters and district force were involved in the operation which was launched based on inputs that Kanta Area Committee of Naxalites was engaged in printing fake notes in Mailasur, Korajguda and Danteshpuram areas of Sukma, he said. On sensing the presence of security personnel near

Korajguda, Naxalites escaped into a dense forest leaving behind their belongings, the official said.

During a search of the site, the security personnel recovered a cache of fake notes in the denominations of ₹50, ₹100, ₹200 and ₹500, a coloured printing machine, a black and white printer, an inverter machine, 200 bottles of ink, four cartridges of printer machine, nine printer rollers, six wireless sets, its charger and batteries, he said. Two muzzle loading guns, a huge cache of explosives, other materials and Naxal 'uniforms' were also seized, Chavan said.

Prima facie it was found that Naxalites were engaged in printing fake notes in huge quantities. Further investigation suggested that in 2022, Naxalites in west Bastar division area gave training of printing fake notes to one or two members of each of their area committees, he said.

The continuous anti-Naxal operations have choked the funding chain of ultras, he said.

Under pressure and due to shortage of funds, Naxalites have been trying to use fake notes for procurement of various items in the weekly markets of the region's interior pockets and duping local tribal vendors, he said.

NEET-UG IRREGULARITIES

CBI files FIR, sends spl teams to Godhra, Patna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: The CBI filed an FIR Sunday in connection with alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG held May 5 on a reference from the Union Education Ministry, amid countrywide protests and litigation by students for a probe into paper leak claims.

Officials said the Ministry alleged in a complaint, now part of the FIR, to the agency that "certain isolated incidents" occurred in a few states during the conduct of the examination.

Giving top priority to the case, the CBI has formed special teams that are en route to Godhra and Patna, where cases of question paper leaks have been registered by police, they said.

The agency plans to take over the investigation of these cases registered by the police in Gujarat

and Bihar, they added. "Steps are being taken to take over cases registered by state police," an official said.

The CBI action came a day after the Ministry announced it would hand over the probe into the alleged irregularities to the Central agency, a demand raised by a section of protesting students.

"The Ministry of Education has requested the CBI to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the entire gamut of alleged irregularities, including conspiracy, cheating, impersonation, breach of trust and destruction of evidence by candidates, institutes and middlemen," a CBI spokesperson said.

The role of public servants, if any, connected with the conduct of the examination and also into the entire gamut of events, and the larger conspiracy will also be under the scanner, according to the officials.

CBI team probing UGC-NET case attacked

New Delhi/Patna: A CBI team probing alleged irregularities in the conduct of the UGC-NET examination was allegedly attacked by locals in Bihar's Nawada after which four persons were arrested by police on a complaint from the Central agency, officials said Sunday. The incident occurred Saturday evening when a team of CBI had gone to Kasiadeeh village in the area, they said. A mob gathered around the CBI vehicles and heckled the officers, they said, adding a call was made to the local police station which dispatched force from Rajauli police station. The local police arrested four persons allegedly involved in the attack and they have been sent to judicial custody, they said.

YOGA AT GOLDEN TEMPLE

FIR against fashion designer for 'hurting religious sentiments'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amritsar, June 23: The Punjab Police has booked a fashion designer and lifestyle influencer for hurting religious sentiments by performing yoga at the Golden Temple complex here.

The case was registered after the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) filed a complaint against fashion designer Archana Makwana.



She was booked under Section 295-A (deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), police said Sunday. The case was registered Saturday.

The SGPC Saturday said it has filed a police complaint against Makwana for hurting religious sentiments by performing yoga at the Golden Temple and sharing those photographs on social media.

Makwana had, however, apologised for her actions and said that she never intended to hurt anyone's religious sentiments. On the International Day of Yoga Friday, Makwana visited the Golden Temple and performed yoga in the 'parikrama' (circumambulation) path.

The SGPC, the apex gurdwara body, had also suspended its three employees for not diligently performing their duties. Makwana had apologised for her conduct later in a story posted on her Instagram handle.

Mayawati declares nephew 'successor'

Lucknow: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati Sunday declared nephew Akash Anand her successor and made him the party's national coordinator, reversing her own previous decision. In the middle of the Lok Sabha elections May 7, she had termed Akash Anand immature and relieved him of the party post. After a national level meeting at the BSP state office here Sunday, the party in a statement said it was handing Akash Anand his former responsibilities back.

Bajrang suspended again over doping

New Delhi: The National Anti-Doping Agency Sunday suspended Bajrang Punia for a second time, three weeks after its Anti-Disciplinary Doping (ADDP) panel had revoked his suspension on the grounds that NADA had not issued a notice of charge to the wrestler. NADA had April 23 suspended the Tokyo Games bronze medalist wrestler for refusal to give his urine sample for dope test during the selection trials held in Sonapat March 10. The global governing body United Wrestling World (UWW) had also suspended him.

Ambulance catches fire; six injured

Balasure: Six people were injured as an ambulance caught fire after colliding with a truck in Balasure district Sunday morning, police said. The accident took place when the ambulance was heading to the Balasure district headquarters hospital (DHH) from Basta with a patient. The ambulance hit the container truck from behind near Murkimundi Chhak in the Rupsa police station area. After the collision, the ambulance caught fire.

UP man cremates 'wife', finds her alive 600 km away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gorakhpur (UP), June 23: A man who cremated his 40-year-old wife four days ago in this Uttar Pradesh district was reunited with her after she was found alive about 600 kilometres away in Jhansi, police said Sunday.

Ram Sumer (60), a resident of Bangaon in Gorakhpur, lodged a complaint that his wife Phoolmati had gone missing June 15. Four days later, a woman's body was found June 19 in the Uruva Bazaar area. Sumer identified the body as that of his wife and completed the last rites, the police said. However, the case took a mys-



terious turn after her post-mortem revealed that the woman had been strangled to death, prompting a further probe, they added.

To nab the suspected killer, the police traced Phoolmati's mobile phone, which was found active about 600 kilometres away in Jhansi. Call records showed

■ Sumer from Gorakhpur had identified a body as that of his missing wife and did the last rites, but post-mortem report said that the woman had been strangled to death

■ To nab the suspected killer, the police traced Phoolmati's mobile phone, which was found active about 600 kilometres away in Jhansi

frequent communication between Phoolmati and a number belonging to one Shubham from Sultanpur.

When questioned, Shubham told the police that Phoolmati was alive and he had brought her to Jhansi. The police subsequently located her at the address provided by Shubham.

Sumer told the police that Phoolmati had left her paternal home June 15 to return to his house but never arrived. After extensive searches, he reported her missing.

Superintendent of Police (South) Jitendra Kumar Tomar said the woman was sent back to her husband Saturday after her statement was recorded. An investigation is underway to determine the connection among Sumer, Phoolmati, Shubham, and the dead woman who was cremated.

The police have also obtained CCTV camera footage showing a boy moving suspiciously and are re-investigating the case from a new angle, he said.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

At times it is a good thing to be under pressure, because it brings out your potential to the fullest. You will outsmart all your colleagues in the work you do. However, results may not match your expectations. Ganesh advises patience as results don't come overnight.

TAURUS

This is a great day for expressions your ideas and feelings. Ganesh urges you to open up and share hopes and concerns, dreams and aspirations with your others. Romance is in the air. You could be flying delightfully high on the wings of love, in the company of your sweetheart.

GEMINI

You will spend your time figuring out other people and their motivations today. You will probably spend time discussing issues of security and finance with your family members today. You will gain love and appreciation from people owing to your caring nature, says Ganesh.

CANCER

You will display a special attention towards beloved ones. This is an apt time for a frank chat on vital issues with your life partner, says Ganesh. You never allow heart to dictate terms to mind, yet today will be sentimental with your wife. Today is the day to feel myriad emotions, says Ganesh.

LEO

Your day will be one of mixed results. On one hand you will be dis-satisfied with your spouse or business partner, on the other hand you will make fantastic returns on your speculations. You will be able to maintain a balance owing to the advice of some friend, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

You will take your destiny in your own hands today. You possess the vision to penetrate the masks that people wear to hide their true selves. You will carefully select the friends to spend your time with, and you will also make plans for success.

LIBRA

Ganesh says today is a good day for government related work. Those of you who are government employees will be able to get good results for their work. Your work will be rewarded and your performance and efficiency will be praised. You will be able to have a heart to heart talk with your loved one.

SCORPIO

Free your mind from negative thoughts. You need to be in high spirits to work with your team and delegate equal responsibilities to your team mates. Know their calibre and designate accordingly. Trust them with their work and the rest would fall in place.

SAGITTARIUS

The morning seems to begin on a lazy note today, as your energy level is equal to zero. Thus, you may try to decentralise your activities and divide it between your co-workers. But make sure the responsibilities are delegated in the right hands or you may have to regret your decision.

CAPRICORN

You will want to expand the horizon of your business. But, you will be confused about the path to take for the expansion. You want to reach to the sky, but such a dilemma will keep you in a double mind. Listen to what your heart says, as it will guide you to the right direction, feels Ganesh.

AQUARIUS

The monotony of your routine will get little bit of colour with the help of your wit and humour. Your jovial nature will lighten the burden of work from the shoulders of one all, says Ganesh. People love to be in your company and that is the reason why you are on the top of every guest list.

PISCES

You will experience mixed feelings today. On one hand tension and stress about how to set a deteriorating situation right will keep you worried, and on the other hand you will be in a mood to accept things for what they are. What you learn now will be very vital in your development, and will help you progress and become a better person in the future, says Ganesh.



MATTHEW WON'T JOIN HARRY POTTER REBOOT

Actor Matthew Lewis, who played Neville Longbottom in the *Harry Potter* films, isn't planning to join the Max series reboot but would consider it if the character were an adult. He enjoys exploring new roles and has played various characters, keeping his career dynamic.

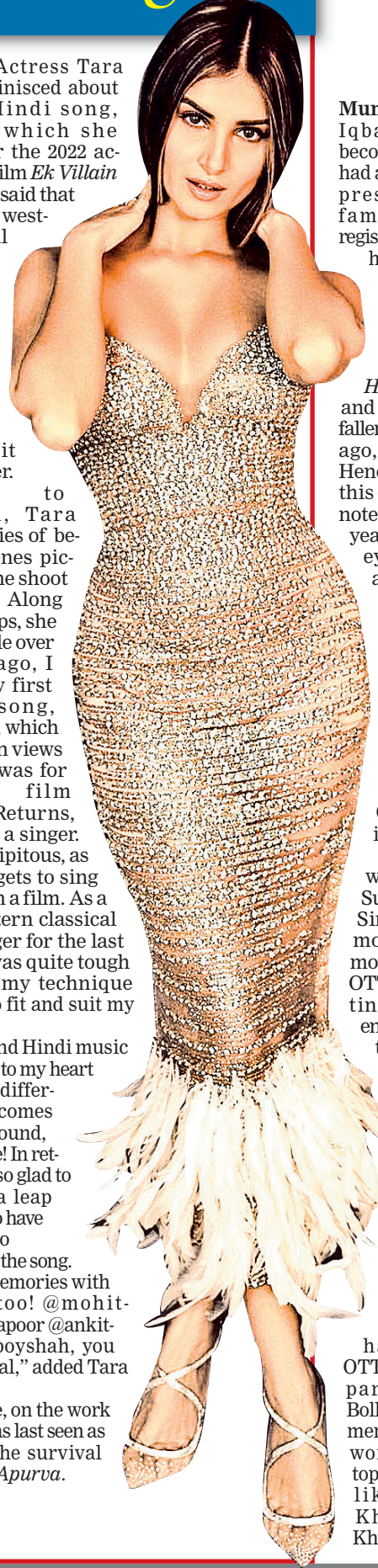
TWAIN BELIEVES EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

Singer Shania Twain isn't bitter about the misfortunes that have occurred in her life as she believes everything happens for a reason. The 58-year-old singer lost her parents at a young age and in 2008, her 15-year marriage to Robert Mutt Lange came to an end after he was allegedly unfaithful, but the *That Don't Impress Me Much* hitmaker harbours no resentment or anger.



Tara's singing challenges

Mumbai: Actress Tara Sutaria reminisced about her first Hindi song, *Shaamat*, which she recorded for the 2022 action thriller film *Ek Villain Returns*, and said that as a trained western classical and pop singer for the last 20 years, she found it challenging to navigate her technique and sound to suit her character. Taking to Instagram, Tara shared a series of behind-the-scenes pictures from the shoot of the song. Along with the snaps, she wrote: "A little over two years ago, I recorded my first Hindi song, #SHAAMAT, which has 93 million views today. This was for our film #EkVillainReturns, where I play a singer. It felt serendipitous, as one seldom gets to sing for oneself in a film. As a trained western classical and pop singer for the last 20 years, it was quite tough to navigate my technique and sound to fit and suit my characters." "English and Hindi music are both close to my heart but entirely different when it comes to training, sound, and technique! In retrospect, I am so glad to have taken a leap and grateful to have experienced so much love for the song. Such sweet memories with everyone, too! @mohitsuri@arjunkapoor@ankitwari@badboyshah, you made it special," added Tara in her post. Meanwhile, on the work front, Tara was last seen as the lead in the survival thriller film *Apurva*.



IANS

Sonakshi, Zaheer get hitched

Mumbai: Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal have officially become husband and wife. The couple had a registered wedding, Sunday in the presence of their family and close friends. The registered wedding took place at Sonakshi's house in Bandra. Post-wedding, the duo is set up for a celebration party at Bastian in Mumbai. The couple has shared their first photos as husband and wife, which are all things love. The *Heeramandi* actress penned a note and revealed that she and Zaheer had fallen in love on this very day, seven years ago, and started their relationship. Hence, they decided to tie the knot on this date. She penned a heartwarming note that said, "On this very day, seven years back (23.06.2017) in each other's eyes, we saw love in its purest form and decided to hold on to it. Today

that love has guided us through all the challenges and triumphs... leading up to this moment... where with the blessings of both our families and both our gods... we are now man and wife. Here's to love, hope and all things beautiful with each other, from now until forever Sonakshi Zaheer 23.06.2024" Earlier in this month, the couple had admitted in a voicemail along with the wedding invitation, which went viral, that they have been in a relationship for 7 years. As per reports, they were also living together for a year before they decided to tie the knot. The duo have shared screen space together in *Double XL*.



AGENCIES

Suchitra speaks out on her OTT career revival

Mumbai: Actress Suchitra Pillai talked about her career resurrection because of the OTT space, ego hassles in the industry and more. Opening up about finding work on the web space, Suchitra said, "It's wonderful. Since turning 50, I've worked more than ever before, even more than in my 20s, thanks to OTT platforms. At 53, I'm getting diverse, women-oriented roles that differ from the stereotypical TV roles I used to play. These opportunities allow me to fully explore my talent, which is great." In the interview, she also noted the absence of ego hassles on OTT sets compared to Bollywood. She mentioned working with top movie stars like Saif Ali Khan, Aamir Khan, and Salman

Khan, and found more ego issues in Bollywood films. While she didn't face these problems directly, as her co-stars were approachable, she observed others displaying diva attitudes and throwing their weight around. "I've seen diva attitudes in the industry, but I don't conform to that. People turn around and tell me to have a diva attitude to avoid people walking all over you and to an extent, that's true. However, at this stage in my career, I've started voicing my opinions and established myself as a credible senior actor. I won't tolerate any nonsense from people and will never change my work ethic. Being where I am today is a blessing, and there's much more to come," she concluded.



AGENCIES

Shahid defines professionalism

Mumbai: Actor Shahid Kapoor criticises actors for prioritising consistent image over role transformations in a recent interview. During a chat with Siddharth Kannan, Shahid disclosed, "I am an actor: I am here to do what the role requires me to do. There are a few actors who love themselves a little too much, and no matter what character they play, they like to look the same. I am not one of them. I like to change it up." With *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jya*, Shahid has come back to romantic-comedy films after a long time. In his recent films like *Bloody Daddy*, *Jersey*, and *Kabir Singh*, he explored various roles, moving away from his earlier image as a romantic lead that he established early in his career. He added, "I am not here to serve my face. I am here to work on different kinds of scripts and mould myself into the demands of those scripts." On the work front, Shahid will be seen next in *Deva* alongside Pooja Hegde.

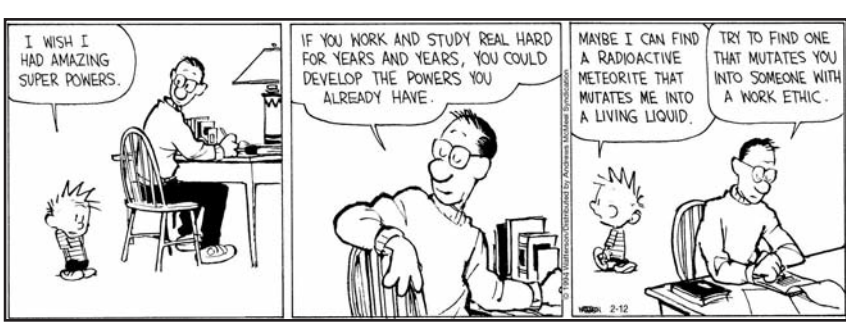


AGENCIES

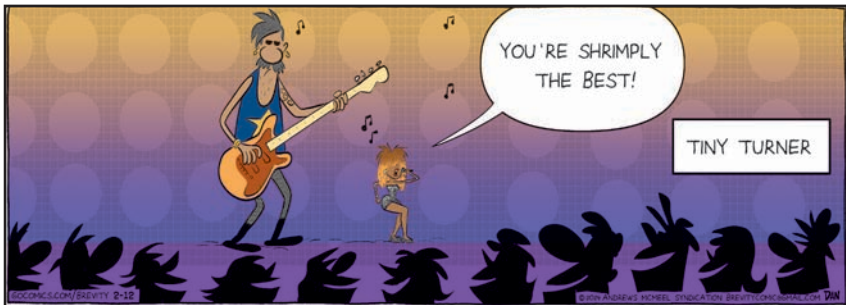
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

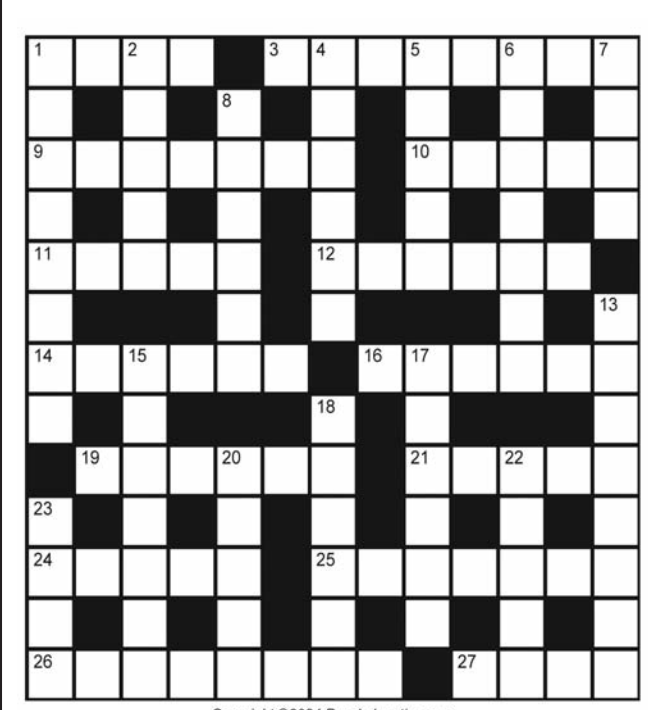


BREVITY



FUN post

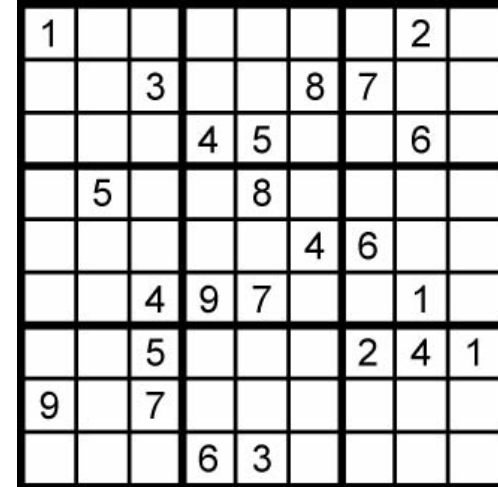
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Low-lying area
 - 3 Australian state
 - 9 Defeat
 - 10 In good shape
 - 11 Breathers
 - 12 Spain and Portugal
 - 14 Chalice
 - 16 Seal of approval
 - 19 Cane material
 - 21 Scornful smile
 - 24 "The Crucible" setting
 - 25 Type of long grained rice
 - 26 Sample
 - 27 Command to Fido
- Down**
- 1 Parson's abode
 - 2 Breathing apparatus
 - 4 Quick-witted
 - 5 Billiards shot
 - 6 Feed
 - 7 Verdi opera
 - 8 Scrap
 - 13 Forever and a day
 - 15 Sightless aid
 - 17 Help
 - 18 Melancholy
 - 20 Disney fawn
 - 22 Right on
 - 23 Horned goddess

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

44 BOOKED FOR DRUNKEN DRIVING

121 vehicles seized for flouting traffic rules in twin city

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 23: The Commissionerate Police claimed that a total of 121 vehicles were seized during checking-and-blocking drive in the twin city of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, Saturday night.

Addressing the media here Sunday, Twin City Police Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda said the enforcement drive was carried out across 55 vulnerable points in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Of the 121 seizures, the police have booked 44 drivers on charges of drunken driving, the rest being charged for rash driving, wrong-side driving and using mobile phone while driving.

Meanwhile, officials of 24 police stations across the City took part in the drive, while being assisted by traffic cops.

During the drive, the police



commissioner said, "Bhubaneswar Traffic Police Station-I seized 32 vehicles, Bhubaneswar Traffic Police Station-II seized 22 vehicles and Cuttack Traffic Police Station seized 17 vehicles. Similarly, five vehicles were seized by the cops on National Highway-16. The remaining 45 vehicles were seized under local police stations following interception."

Following the seizure, the police have filed cases against violators in the court, and requested the local RTOs for immediate cancellation of the driving licences. In order to release the vehicles, the violators will have to pay penalties in the court, said a senior cop.

KISS land allotment on hold

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, June 23: In a major blow to Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), founded by former BJD MP Achyuta Samanta, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram has directed the Khurda Collector to keep in abeyance the process for conversion of 4.032 ha forest land allotted to the institution under Chandaka wildlife division till further clarity.

The direction came June 21 on a complaint received by the ministry over conversion of forest land status. According to reports, the Collector had initiated the process for the conversion in favour of KISS. The Union minister has directed the Collector to put on hold the conversion process until clarification is made by the Central government and a formal approval is made.

Education system handed over to mafia: Priyanka

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 23: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Sunday attacked the Narendra Modi government over the alleged irregularities in national competitive exams, including NEET-UG, alleging that it has handed over the entire education system to the "mafia" and the "corrupt".

Her reaction came a day after the Union education ministry set up a panel to review the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) - the body responsible for conducting the tests - and recommend exam reforms. The Centre Saturday also shunted out the agency's Director General Subodh Singh and handed over the probe into the irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET-UG to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

In a post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said the NEET-UG question paper was "leaked" while the NEET-PG, UGC-NET and CSIR-

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs issues order to keep in abeyance the process of conversion of 4.032 ha forest land under Chandaka wildlife division
- Union Tribal Affairs department directs the state govt and the Chief Secretary to take appropriate action in this connection
- Environmentalists raise questions over the grant of permission for 'illegal' constructions on forest land

NET exams were "cancelled". "This is the condition of some of the biggest examinations in the country today. Under the BJP's rule, the entire education system has been handed over to the mafia and the corrupt," the Congress leader said in her post in Hindi.

"The political stubbornness and arrogance of handing over the country's education and the future of children to greedy and sycophantic incompetent people has made paper leaks, cancellation of exams, disappearance of education from campuses

and political hooliganism the identity of our education system," she said.

"Today, the BJP government has become the single biggest hurdle for the future of the youth. The capable youth of the country are wasting their precious time and energy in fighting the corruption of the BJP and the helpless Modi ji is just being a spectator," she said.

The National Eligibility-cum-

from the Centre.

Meanwhile, though no reaction was received from Samanta, Khurda Collector Chanchal Rana said, "We have received the letter from the ministry and it is being examined. We don't know what happened in the past and the case records are being examined. What is there on the land will be investigated."

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has separately sought clarifications from the state government on the matter.



The situation has become such that the BJP govt cannot even conduct one examination in a fair manner, Priyanka alleged

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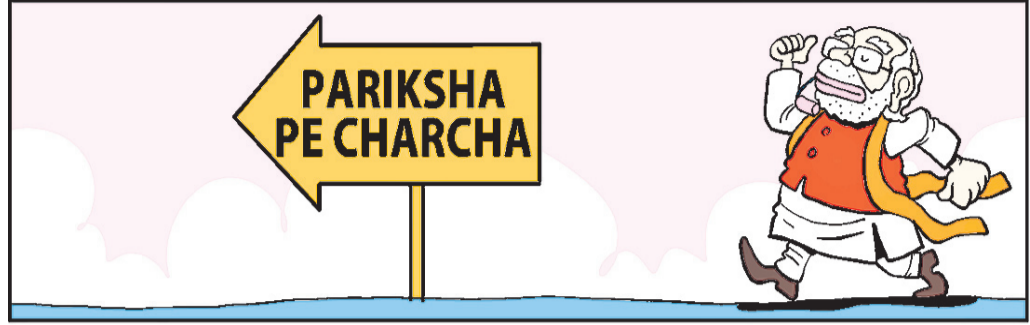
The National Eligibility-cum-

SHOWERS OF RELIEF

A brief spell of rain lashed Bhubaneswar, Sunday, even as the state witnessed a delayed southwest monsoon this year



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Entrance Test (NEET)-PG, conducted for admission to post-graduate medical courses, was scheduled to be held June 23 but was postponed as a "precautionary measure" in the wake of recent allegations on the integrity of some competitive exams, including the NEET-Undergraduate (UG).

The NTA Friday announced the postponement of the June edition of the Joint Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test (CSIR-NET), citing unavoidable circumstances and logistic issues.

It came two days after the agency cancelled the University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) within 24 hours of its conduct saying the integrity of the exam had been compromised, and a massive row on NEET over alleged irregularities, with the issue now before the Supreme Court.

CM pays tributes to Jana Sangh founder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 23: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi paid tributes to Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his death anniversary Sunday.

Majhi, along with Odisha Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy and Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, offered floral tributes at Mookerjee's statue at a park named after him in Satsang Vihar area of Bhubaneswar.

The state government is observing his death anniversary as 'Balidan Diwas'.

In an X post, Majhi described Mookerjee as a symbol of national unity and integrity and paid homage to him.

Mookerjee, who was a politician, barrister and academician, served as the minister for



Industry and Supply in Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet.

He founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the predecessor of the BJP, in 1951.



CAR FEST AHEAD: Chariot construction in full swing at Rath Yard in Puri, Sunday

OP PHOTO

5 Cong workers expelled over ink attack on Sarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 23: The Congress Sunday expelled five of its leaders, including the party's state unit general secretary, for six years for their alleged involvement in an incident in which ink was thrown at Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Sarat Pattanayak.

Two masked persons had Friday thrown ink at the OPCC chief at the party's state headquarters here.

OPCC general secretary Prakash Mishra, Odisha Pradesh Mahila Congress general secretary Shriyasmitha Panda, the party's student wing National Students' Union of India secretary Sandip Routray, youth Congress state secretary Amresh Parida and NSUI state secretary Aryan Sasmal were expelled for six years, a party leader said.



FILE PHOTO

OPCC disciplinary action committee chairman Santosh Singh Saluja issued the expulsion order. Saluja said a few office bearers and some of those who held various posts of the party were disciplined and damaged the image of the organisation.

Two unidentified persons had entered Pattanayak's chambers June 21 morning and splashed blue ink on his clothes, before fleeing from the spot.

"Based on TV footage, for such anti-party and indiscipline activities, Sarat Pattanayak, president of OPCC, has expelled the Congresspersons for six years," Saluja said in his order.

The party has forwarded a copy of the expulsion order to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and AICC in-charge of Odisha Ajay Kumar.

Curfew further relaxed in Balasore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasore, June 23: With the situation in Balasore town gradually returning to normal, curfew in the town has been further relaxed, an official said, Sunday.

According to an order, curfew has been partially lifted from Sahadevkhunta police station limits from 5 am to 9 pm, and from 5 am to 2 pm in areas falling under Town police station.

All schools, Anganwadi centres, and colleges will remain open Monday. Commercial establishments have been allowed to operate during the relaxed curfew periods, the order added.

Curfew was initially imposed Monday (June 17) night following a group clash that resulted in several injuries.

Balasore collector Ashis Thakare said curfew, along with

its relaxation periods, will continue until further notice.

He mentioned that mobile internet services, which were shut down following the imposition of curfew, are likely to be restored from Monday, pending approval from the home department.

However, authorities will closely monitor any spread of false propaganda or rumours, he added.

The administration is organising peace committee meetings comprising members from all communities and prominent local personalities. Similar committees will also be formed at the ward and slum (basti) levels, he informed.

Balasore SP Sagarika Nath said 21 cases have been registered and 89 people forwarded to court for violations of the law since the clash occurred.

Ultra-processed food, sedentary lifestyle fuelling cancers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 23: Poor lifestyle choices with regular consumption of ultra-processed foods, and a sedentary lifestyle are increasing cancer cases among people under 40 years of age in India, said doctors Sunday.

Several factors are contributing to the rise in cancer cases among younger people in India. One of the primary reasons is increased consumption of processed foods, tobacco, and alcohol, sedentary lifestyles, obesity, and stress. Environmental pollution is another critical factor. India's cities are plagued by high levels of pollution, which has been linked to various types of cancer.

Air and water pollution expose individuals to carcinogenic

substances, significantly increasing their cancer risk.

"Ultra-processed foods and sedentary lifestyles are emerging as significant contributors to the rising cancer rates among young Indians. High intake of these foods, laden with unhealthy additives, combined with physical inactivity, is creating a health crisis," Rahul Bhargava, director and head of the department of Haematology and BMT at Fortis Memorial Research Institute told IANS.

"It's imperative to adopt healthier dietary habits and an active lifestyle to curb this alarming trend," he added.

According to a recent study by Cancer Mukh Bharat Foundation, a Delhi-based non-profit foundation, 20 per cent of cancer cases in India are now being diagnosed in people below



40 years of age. The study shows that men constitute 60 per cent of these young cancer patients, while women make up the remaining 40 per cent.

Gender disparity may be due to higher rates of tobacco use, oc-

cupational exposure, and lifestyle choices among men in India.

"In our country, escalating rates of obesity, change in dietary habits, specifically the increase in consumption of ultra-processed food, and sedentary lifestyles are associated with

higher cancer rates," Ashish Gupta, principal investigator and senior oncologist at Unique Hospital Cancer Center, Delhi, told IANS.

The doctors called for urgent need for lifestyle interventions to combat the rising cancer rates among young Indians. Dr. Ashish, also heading Cancer Mukh Bharat Campaign in India, emphasised the importance of a "combined effort from the government, healthcare professionals, and the community to tackle the rising cancer rates among young adults".

"Policies promoting clean air and water, regular physical activity, and access to nutritious food must be prioritised. Additionally, we must invest in better healthcare infrastructure to ensure timely diagnosis and treatment," he said.

Plastic debris impacting mangrove ecosystems



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 23: Plastic debris, originating from nearby villages and urban centres, is suffocating mangrove ecosystems, posing a significant threat to biodiversity and coastal environment in the state.

This was observed by a team of delegates from Odisha Paryavaran Sanrakshan Abhiyan (OPSA) Trust who recently visited the coastal regions and witnessed the alarming pace of mangrove degradation and its profound impact on marine health.

To address the issue, Forum for Integrated Development and Research (FIDR) Bhubaneswar with support from the US Consulate General Hyderabad, has started an initiative 'CAP 4 COP-Community Awareness and Participation for Coastal and Oceanic Habitat Preservation' with (OPSA) Trust.

This initiative mobilised a team of stakeholders, including women, youth, local journalists, and elected representatives.

During the field trip, the team

covered key mangrove areas within a 15 to 20 kilometre radius, specifically targeting zones plagued by erosion and severe plastic pollution.

According to experts, mangroves play a critical role in shoreline stabilisation, erosion prevention, and resilience against natural calamities.

"The mangrove ecosystems also harbour a diverse array of species, ranging from large mammals to various avian species, crucial for maintaining ecological equilibrium," they said.

In addition, mangroves provide vital livelihood opportunities through fisheries, tourism, and handicrafts crucial for bolstering local economies, they noted.

The initiative prioritised raising awareness among marginalised women from Jharling and Chhuriana Gram Panchayats in Astaranga block of Puri district. These women were identified as highly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Leveraging interactive methods such as street play by coastal community artists and mural painting, the programme effec-

According to experts, mangroves play a critical role in shoreline stabilisation, erosion prevention, and resilience against natural calamities

tively engaged the wider community, fostering environmental literacy and encouraging active involvement in mangrove conservation efforts.

Beyond mangrove preservation, the initiative aimed to integrate community efforts towards safeguarding Olive Ridley Sea turtles and preserving Chilika, a designated first Ramsar site of India.

Educating communities on broader environmental issues aimed to instill sustainable practices and promote the conservation of local ecosystems.

The initiative also included training on wildlife ethics, establishment of mangrove nurseries, and exploring revenue models linked to community-led coastal biodiversity conservation. The collaborative efforts with government officials, PRI members, and various local stakeholders played a pivotal role in advancing the initiative's objectives.

The field exposure visits underscored the urgent need for coordinated action in mangrove conservation to mitigate climate change impacts and safeguard coastal ecosystems.

The initiative marks a significant stride towards nurturing environmental stewardship and resilience amidst mounting ecological challenges.



IN SYNC: Artistes perform during the 13th Odissi Nritya Sangeeta Samman Utsav at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

PIC: MAUSAM NANDA

'Implement land, forest rights of Adivasis'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 23: Implement the land rights and forest rights of Adivasis, Dalits and other marginalised communities, demanded forest right activist Prafulla Samantara and Lingaraj Azad at state conference of National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) at Lohia Bhawan here, Sunday.

The new government headed by an Adivasi chief minister must put an end to the mindless exploitation of natural resources carried out by the previous government and provide marginalised communities of their rights.

Many leaders and representatives of various people's movement in the state joined the con-



ference. They were urged to protect the social and cultural identity of Adivasis and forest dwellers.

"Land must be given to land-

less Dalits and peasantry instead of transferring them to land banks. All Adivasis and traditional forest dwellers must be provided pattas and recog-

nitiation as per the Forest Rights Act," they demanded.

"There is a need to cancel all mining leases that have been auctioned to companies without the consent of Gram Sabhas. Also, the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (2006) is required, through which the verdicts of the people and communities will be given full respect and recognition," Samantara said.

"The previous government has violated the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015, Article 244 and the Fifth Schedule in the Constitution of India. In last 24 years, Adivasis have been forcefully displaced, faced fabricated cases and suffered brutal violence by the police for protecting forest, land and water," he added.

Patients suffer due to treatment delay

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, June 23: The patients visiting Srirama Chandra Bhanja Medical College & Hospital (SCBMCH) here are facing difficulties in getting treatment on time

due to alleged mismanagement. A woman from Jagatsinghpur recently complained about treatment refusal by the hospital staff despite consulting the doctors. Pravat Das, in her complaint



to hospital authorities, said, "For the last four days, I have been running to the Radiodiagnosis department to get my relative examined but I did not get a slot." "My relative Premalata Das has been admitted in the hospital and she needs her ultrasound done. Though the necessary tests were done with the consultation of the doctors, we are still waiting for the Radiodiagnosis," she said. "On the first day, the staff refused us to carry the test citing prob-

lem in the machine and instead gave us a token. The next day, we came and stood in the queue for long hours but in the end were refused again," she further said. The treatment of the patient is currently halted, as further treatment and medication will be only possible after the doctor examines the ultrasound report, Pravat said.

OrissaPOST, after learning about the case, sought response from SCB superintendent Sudhansu Sekhar Mishra. He said, "The number of patients visiting SCBMCH is increasing day-by-day. We try to deal with as many patients as possible on a daily basis. I got to know about this issue from the media sources. We will raise the issue with the concerned authorities and make necessary arrangements."

ICSI holds 1st CS state conference

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 23: The Bhubaneswar Chapter of the Eastern India Regional Council (EIRC) of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) concluded its first CS state conference here, Sunday.

The conference was organised under the leadership of Bhubaneswar Chapter chairman CS Rudra Madhab Sahoo. The two-day event on the theme 'Abhyudaya - Rise of CS in the Dawn of Governance' brought together prominent dignitaries, industry experts, and over 250 company secretaries from across the state.

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Industries, Skill



Development & Technical Education, Sampad Chandra Swain graced the occasion as chief guest.

In his address, Swain shared valuable insights into governance and compliance strategies for upcoming industries in the state. He also invited suggestions from the professionals to foster state's industrial inclusive growth.

Among the guests present on

the occasion were, CA Rajib Sekhar Sahoo, Member Company Law Committee from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Himanshu Shekhar, Registrar of Companies cum OL, Cuttack.

CS Ravichandran KS delivered the keynote address on compounding, penalty and adjudication, while CA Biswaranjan Sutar addressed the complexities of audit trails in compliance.

'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 23: Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Mission Shakti, Pravat Parida initiated 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign by planting a 'Baula' sapling at Mission Shakti Bhawan here, Sunday.

Parida also chaired a meeting with the Mission Shakti district and block federation leaders, along with community support staff. She emphasised the importance of honouring motherhood and encouraged citizens to plant a tree.

The deputy CM highlighted the need for the community involvement in sustainability of the environment and urged Mission Shakti self help group (SHG) leaders and officials to take up this campaign across the state.

Parida also acknowledged the presence and scope of Mission Shakti, bringing socio-economic development across the state.

On the occasion, SHG members and leaders in support of the campaign, pledged to plant 2.5 crore trees.

Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) State Mission Director and CEO Vineet Bhardwaj, senior government officials and other staff of the department were present on the occasion.



Urinary incontinence may affect skin & kidneys

Urinary incontinence – the involuntary loss of bladder control – can also have a significant effect on your skin and kidneys, said doctors Sunday.

World Urinary Continence Week is observed between June 17 to 23 to raise awareness of bladder and bowel problems.

Urinary incontinence causes involuntary loss of bladder control, leading to the accidental leakage of urine. It is a common condition that can range from occasional minor leaks to more frequent and severe issues.

"The combination of hormones and stretched muscles means the muscles that control your bladder are weakened. This can lead to an accidental leak of urine," Ashwin Mallya, Consultant, Urologist, and Robotic, Uro Onco Surgeon, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, told IANS.



Urinary incontinence causes involuntary loss of bladder control, leading to the accidental leakage of urine

IT IS A COMMON CONDITION THAT CAN RANGE FROM OCCASIONAL MINOR LEAKS TO MORE FREQUENT AND SEVERE ISSUES

"Urinary incontinence doesn't just affect the bladder but it can lead to skin issues like rashes and infections due to constant moisture. Additionally, it can cause urinary tract infections (UTIs), and in severe cases, it

may lead to kidney damage," he added.

The doctor said that it can also lead to mental health problems like "anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Many people may start avoiding social ac-

66 Urinary incontinence doesn't just affect the bladder but it can lead to skin issues, cause urinary tract infections (UTIs), and in severe cases, may lead to kidney damage

ASHWIN MALLYA | CONSULTANT, UROLOGIST, AND ROBOTIC, URO ONCO SURGEON, SIR GANGA RAM HOSPITAL

tivities or situations where they feel embarrassment, which can lead to social isolation and a reduced quality of life".

The condition can affect individuals of all ages but is more prevalent among older adults, especially women during pregnancy and childbirth.

If it continues for long in women after childbirth and without childbirth is the point of concern that needs to be treated,

the health expert said.

Arif Akhtar, Senior Consultant - Urology, Marengo Asia Hospital, Gurugram told IANS that bladder control declines due to age-related changes such as weakening pelvic floor muscles and excessive or insufficient bladder muscle activity, leading to the condition.

"Stress incontinence can result from pelvic muscle stretches and increased bladder pressure during pregnancy and childbirth. Reduced urethral closure pressure and urogenital shrinkage are the outcomes of menopause-induced oestrogen reduction. Overflow incontinence in males is a result of both benign prostatic hyperplasia and problems following a prostatectomy".

Studies show that up to 45 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men in India suffer from some

form of urinary incontinence. This disparity is largely due to differences in anatomy, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause, which are unique risk factors for women.

"Pelvic Floor Muscle Training (PFMT) with Kegel exercises and therapies to strengthen pelvic muscles are just a few of the many strategies used to prevent urinary incontinence," Arif told IANS.

Other approaches involve adopting a healthy lifestyle, by maintaining a healthy weight as it reduces pressure on the bladder, staying active by doing regular exercise to strengthen pelvic floor muscles; limiting caffeine and alcohol as these can irritate the bladder; quitting smoking because smoking can lead to coughing, which exacerbates stress incontinence, the doctors said.

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Patient, 5 more hurt in ambulance mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rupsa, June 23: Six persons suffered serious injuries when an ambulance carrying them and a patient burst into flames



after colliding with a container truck at Murkimundi Chowk on NH-16 under this police limits in Balasore district Sunday morning, police said.
The injured patient was identified as Jatindra Singh. The others who got hurt were his wife, nephew, the ambulance

driver and helper, and a pharmacist, police informed.
Jatindra, a resident of Putura village under Basta block experienced chest pain Saturday night. He was rushed to the community health centre there. However, as his condition deteriorated, doctors asked the family members of Jatindra to shift him to the Balasore district headquarters hospital.
The '108 ambulance' (Regd No- OD 02-CN-9088) was en route to Balasore when the mishap happened. On being informed, a police team reached the spot and took the injured to the hospital. As a result of the impact, the oxygen cylinder in the ambulance exploded and the vehicle caught fire, police said.
Later in the day as the condition of Jatindra and the pharmacist deteriorated they were shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.



ENTHRALLING PERFORMANCE: Artistes staging 'Sunya Mandira', a drama based on Jagannath culture, at Utkal Ashram in Berhampur on the 16th anniversary of Odisha Natak Samaroha Samiti

US not keen to import sea fish

POST NEWS NETWORK
Paradip, June 23: The United States of America (USA) is not keen on importing sea fish from the harbour here in Jagatsinghpur district - also all fishing harbours in the country - due to decline in fish quality, over-processing and delay in transport.

According to reports, export of sea fish to foreign countries is one of the main sources of earnings for Odisha and other states on the eastern coast of the country. The lack of interest on part of the US to procure fish has sparked concerns among fishermen and fish producers in the port town.

The fishermen earn their livelihood by catching fish from sea and exporting the stock to the US and several other countries. The US is a major seafood market.

According to the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), a statutory body established in 1972 under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, US imported sea fish worth 2,549.15 million dollars in FY 2023-24.

Meanwhile, the MPEDA has flagged all the fishing harbours in the country over declining fish quality, and the prevalent practice of processing fish as well as its transport. It has asked to change the standard operating procedure (SOP) - from fish production, processing to export.



As per government reports, around 17,81,602 MT of sea fish was exported from India in FY 2023-24, and the country earned ₹60,523.89 crore (7.38 billion US dollars) in foreign exchange from it.

The issue of the plummeting demand for fish cropped up during a meeting organised by MPEDA at the fishing harbour in this port town, Wednesday.

Archiman Lahiri, deputy director of MPEDA said that US has questions over the quality of fish exported from here. It has asked to improve the quality within March 2025 deadline. The authorities there have warned to impose a total ban on import of fish from here if no improvement was marked in the quality,

he said.
The MPEDA has urged the Odisha Marine Fish Producers' Association (OMFPA), the apex body of fishing trawlers and fish producers at Paradip, to reduce the time consumed between processing of fish and its transport.
Sources said on an average, a fishing boat takes at least a week's time to return to the harbour with the catch. The fish caught on daily basis are kept in cold storage to save them from rotting.
A fisherman said ideally around 1,200 gm of ice is required to refrigerate a kilogram of fish. However, most of the fishermen are, instead, using only 700-800 gm of ice for refrigeration of a kilo of fish.
The stock in the boat's cold

storage is emptied after the boat reaches the harbour, before it is taken to the auction hall where various types of fish are segregated and auctioned.

Agents from various export firms procure fish during auction and load the consignments in their respective vehicles for Bhubaneswar where the processing plant is located. Workers at the plant remove shells from prawns and shrimps (main export items) which are then kept in cold storage before those are exported.

The entire process, from procurement to export, takes at least eight to 14 hours, Manas Padhiari, an agent, said. "This prolonged time period however, results in decline in the quality of fish. As a result, the food safety and inspection service (FSIS) of the US government is rejecting the consignments after arrival of fish in their country following inspection," he said.

Lahiri meanwhile, suggested the setting up of a processing plant right inside the fishing harbour in the port town to reduce the time between processing and transport.

The price of the fish will be more if its quality remains intact and unchanged, he said.

OMFPA president Srikant Parida said that the Fisheries department of the state government or at the Centre should take steps to establish a processing plant in Paradip.

6 years on, modern bus terminal at Jaipur remains a pipe dream

POST NEWS NETWORK
Jaipur, June 23: The construction of a proposed modern bus terminal in this district headquarters town has remained a non-starter despite the then state government sanctioning funds for the project in 2018.

The project has not made any headway in the last six years owing to alleged administrative negligence.

Jaipur town is famous for a number of religious shrines like Maa Biraja temple, Saptamatruka temple on Baitarani river bank, Baraha temple and Kusuma tank which are of immense mythological, historical and tourism importance. Maa Biraja is the presiding deity of the district and the temple draws thousands of devotees on daily basis from within and outside the district.

The district headquarters town has undergone significant changes following land acquisition for establishment of a medical college, mini secretariat, up-gradation of the district headquarters hospital (DHH), district court, road expansion works and renovation of Kusuma tank.

However, the construction of the modern bus terminal near Kianalli in the town, which received sanction in June, 2018, is yet to take off except for the land acquisition. On the other hand, devotees and tourists visiting these temples and places of



tourist attraction in the district are undergoing harrowing experience in the absence of a modern bus terminal in the town.

Sources said the state Housing and Urban Development Department sanctioned funds in three phases for the construction of the proposed bus terminal, June 12, 2018. The state government also directed the Jaipur municipality authorities to withdraw the sanctioned funds and deposit it in the account of the executive engineer of Panikoilli roads and buildings (R and B) department for the purpose.

The then under secretary PK Sahu of state Housing and Urban Development Department in his letter no-15109, dated-12.06.2018 sanctioned ₹1.17 crore, in letter no-15103, dated-12.06.2018 sanctioned ₹45.17 lakh and letter no-15097, dated-12.06.2018 sanctioned ₹33.38 lakh towards the project.

The town has an old and small bus stand. However, passenger

buses entering the town and leaving the bus-stand find it difficult to traverse through the town due to acute traffic problems. That prompted the then state government to decide constructing a new and modern bus terminal at Kianalli in the town.

Similarly, the government identified land for the construction of a bus stand at Bindhan mouza under Panasa panchayat of Sadar block. A tender was floated for the purpose December 7, 2021. The Works department approved the tender submitted by consultancy firm Sai Shiva Construction and asked it to start works, January 11, 2022.

The consultancy agency also paid ₹2.91 crore towards security deposit. However, price of construction materials increased due to delay in land acquisition. The agency informed that it could no longer work on the project as per old rates and warned to pull back if prices were not revised.

However, the construction of a modern bus terminal and the bus stand at Bindhan mouza has failed to make any progress after being caught in bureaucratic red-tapism, sources said.

When contacted, assistant executive engineer Bhagaban Sahoo of Works department said land has been acquired for the bus terminal, and assured that steps will be taken at the earliest for the constructions.

Minor boy critically hurt in Hyena attack

Patana: A four-year-old boy was critically injured in hyena attack at Ninhua village under Khireitangiri section of Patana range in Keonjhar district, late Saturday night. The injured minor was identified as Babaji Munda, son of late Anam Munda of the village. According to information, due to severe heat and humidity conditions, the minor boy along with her mother and other family members were sleeping outside their home when the hyena attacked him. He received severe injuries on his belly and back in the attack. The wild animal left the critically injured boy and ran off when others woke up and drove it away. On being informed, Forest officer Dali Rani Sahu reached the spot and assured the family of assistance as per government guidelines.

Sex racket busted, 2 customers held

Berhampur: Acting on a tip-off, a special team of Baidyanathpur police station busted a sex racket during a raid at a rented house at Ashok Nagar, ninth lane in the town, late Friday night. During the raid, two sex workers were rescued while an equal number of customers were rounded up. The accused were identified as Swadhin Behera of Ganjam and Mangulu Jena of Patapur area in Ganjam district. The police team also seized some objectionable materials from the house during the raid. The raid took place after Baidyanathpur police were alerted about a sex racket operating out of the house. The two customers were allegedly caught in compromising position with the two sex workers during the raid.

Sundargarh Govt College seeks 'Tribal Univ' status

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rourkela, June 23: The Alumni association of the Sundargarh Government College here has demanded that the premier educational institution be given the tag of 'Tribal University'. They have said that the college certainly has the infrastructure to get the status. Sources stated here Sunday that Jual Oram, MP Sundargarh and Minister of Tribal Affairs, is positively disposed towards the proposal.
The Sundargarh Government College was established in 1958 and since then it has created a niche for itself as one of the premier educational institutes in



Odisha. Apart from people from the districts of Keonjhar, Deogarh, Jharsuguda and Sambalpur, the institution also attracts students from the states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. With the number of students seeking admission growing rapidly, the government has constructed a boys' and a

girls' hostel. Currently there are three residential hostels for boys and girls.

As the institution has a large number of tribal students, the Alumni association has decided to press forward its demand so that the college gets the status of 'Tribal University'. The college has 158 acres of lands of its own

and several buildings housing various departments. It has the necessary infrastructure which a university requires like playgrounds, well-equipped library and modern laboratories.

The demand for the 'Tribal University' status was first initiated in 2020 when Sundargarh Government College celebrated its diamond jubilee. A proposal on the issue was presented to then Odisha Governor, Prof Ganeshi Lal. Now the Alumni association has presented the same proposal to Oram, sources stated here Sunday. They added that the status will be granted as Oram is now the Minister of Tribal Affairs.

Man critically hurt in wild bear attack

POST NEWS NETWORK
Nuapada, June 23: A wild bear critically injured a 50-year-old man at Soseng village, situated inside the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary under Komana block in this district, Sunday.
The injured was identified as Tulsingh Majhi, a resident of Soseng village.

According to information, around 9 am, Sunday, Tulsingh had taken his goats for grazing in a field when a wild bear suddenly emerged from the jungles in the vicinity, and attacked him.

Tulsingh put up a fight with the wild animal which tore off both his legs and mauled him severely.

Hearing Tulsingh's screams, fellow villagers who were working in nearby fields rushed to the spot and managed to shoe off the wild bear.

They rescued Tulsingh in a critical condition and rushed him to Sunabeda hospital. After getting preliminary treatment, he was shifted to Nuapada district headquarters hospital (DHH) for further treatment. His condition is stated to be stable.

Farmers blame heat, media for increase in vegetable prices

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rourkela, June 23: The intense heat wave and a 'hyper active media' are the two major factors for the increase in the vegetable prices, farmers stated here Sunday.

The vegetable sellers here, mostly tribals, have blamed the two issues for the spiraling cost of vegetables. "Availability of water is not an issue, because we have sufficient supply in our wells and water bodies. However, the intense heatwave in the last couple of months have led to

the rotting of vegetables," said Mahidhar Sahu, a farmer from Khuntagaon, selling long gourd and other leafy vegetables.

Sahu's opinion was seconded by another vegetable seller from Bisra sitting next to him at the daily market in Shakti Nagar. "He (Sahu) is right. We have water, but it's the heat which has destroyed the vegetables. I was providing water on the ground twice daily where I was cultivating padwal. Even then, I could only save half of my cultivation," informed Giridhari Munda.



Mano Xalxo, an agriculturist from OUAT and a successful

farmer however, blamed the media for the increase in prices

of vegetables. "I will blame the media for the increase in prices. We were selling tomatoes, the indigenous variety for ₹40-50 per kilogram. Suddenly the media reported that the prices have gone up to ₹70. They also said that it will soon touch ₹100 per kilogram. Had they done a bit of research, then they would have reported in a proper manner," he stated.

Another media-savvy farmer who sells his produces at the Rajgangpur local market stated that the media only reports about prices in Bhubaneswar and

Cuttack. "The media needs to realise that there are other places in Odisha also. Once they report about the prices at Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, locals here also increase the rates. And the middlemen make the maximum profits pinching the pockets of customers," he said.

Professor Sree Kumar however, blamed the price rise of vegetables due to the heatwave. "The farmers lost their crops due to the heat leading to a shortage of supply. It is the main reason for vegetable prices skyrocketing," Kumar stated.

FOCUS POLITICS

CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY



For democracy to regain the public's support and trust, it needs to become more pro-worker and egalitarian

dence shows that non-democratic regimes ultimately reduce growth in the long term. Nonetheless, democratic institutions and political leaders will need to make a renewed commitment to building a fair economy. That means prioritising workers and ordinary citizens over multinationals, banks, and global concerns, and fostering trust in the right kind of technocracy. It will not do to have aloof officials imposing policies in the interest of global companies. To address climate change, unemployment, inequality, AI, and the disruptions of globalisation, democracies need to blend expertise with public support.

This will not be easy, because many voters have come to distrust centrist parties. Even though the hard left – as represented by Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France – has greater credibility than mainstream politicians in terms of its commitment to working people and independence from banking and global business interests, it is unclear whether left-wing populist policies would truly deliver the economy that voters want.

This suggests one way forward for centrist parties. They can start with a manifesto that rejects blind allegiance to global business and unregulated globalisation, and offers a clear, workable plan for combining economic growth with lower inequality. They also should strike a closer balance between openness and allowing for reasonable limits on migration.

If enough French voters support pro-democracy parties against National Rally in the parliamentary election's second round, Macron's gamble may well work. But even if it does, business as usual cannot continue. For democracy to regain the public's support and trust, it needs to become more pro-worker and egalitarian.

The writer is Institute Professor of Economics at MIT.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Even if the feared extremist wave did not quite materialise in the European Parliament election this month, the far-right performed well in Italy, Austria, Germany, and especially France. Moreover, its latest gains have come on the heels of major shifts toward far-right parties in Hungary, Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, and Sweden, among others.

In France, the resounding victory for Marine Le Pen's National Rally cannot be dismissed as a mere protest vote. The party already controls many local governments, and its success this month has induced President Emmanuel Macron to call early elections – a gamble that could give it a parliamentary majority.

At some level, there is nothing new here. We already knew that democracy was increasingly strained around the world, with intensifying challenges from authoritarian parties. Surveys show that a growing share of the population is losing confidence in democratic institutions. Nevertheless, the far-right's inroads with younger voters are particularly worrying. No one can now deny that this latest election was a wake-up call. But unless we understand the root causes of the trend, efforts to protect democracy against institutional collapse and extremism are unlikely to succeed.

The simple explanation for the crisis of democracy across the industrialised world is that the system's performance has fallen short of what it promised. In the United States, real (inflation-adjusted) incomes at the bottom and the middle of the distribution have hardly increased since 1980, and elected politicians have done little about it. Similarly, in much of Europe, economic growth has been lacklustre, especially since 2008. Even if youth unemployment has declined recently, it has long been a major economic issue in France and several other European countries.

The Western model of liberal

democracy was supposed to deliver jobs, stability, and high-quality public goods. While it mostly succeeded following World War II, it has fallen short on almost every count since around 1980. Policymakers from both the left and the right continued touting policies designed by experts and administered by highly qualified technocrats. But these not only failed to deliver shared prosperity; they also created the conditions for the 2008 financial crisis, which stripped away any remaining veneer of success. Most voters concluded that politicians cared more about bankers than workers.

My own work with Nicolás Ajzenman, Cevat Giray Aksoy, Martin Fiszbein, and Carlos Molina shows that voters tend to support democratic institutions when they have direct experience of democracies delivering economic growth, noncorrupt government, social and economic stability, public services, and low inequality. It therefore comes as no surprise that a failure to satisfy these conditions would result in a loss of support.

Democratic leaders have increasingly lost touch with the population's deeper concerns. In the French case, this partly reflects Macron's imperious leadership style. But it also reflects a broader decline of trust in institutions, as well as the role of social media and other communication technologies in promoting polarising positions (on both the

left and the right) and pushing much of the population into ideological echo chambers.

Policymakers and mainstream politicians were also somewhat tone deaf to the kinds of economic and cultural turbulence that large-scale immigration brings. In Europe, a significant share of the population expressed concerns about mass immigration from the Middle East over the past decade, but centrist politicians (particularly center-left leaders) were slow to engage with the issue. That created a big opportunity for fringe anti-immigration parties like the Sweden Democrats and the Dutch Party for Freedom, which have since become formal or informal coalition partners for ruling parties.

The challenges hampering shared prosperity in the industrialised world will become even more of an issue in the age of AI and automation – and this at a time when climate change, pandemics, mass migration, and various threats to regional and global peace are all growing concerns.

But democracy is still best equipped to deal with these issues. Historical and current evidence make it clear that non-democratic regimes are less responsive to the needs of their population, and less effective at helping disadvantaged citizens. Whatever the Chinese model might promise, the evi-



Daron Acemoglu

SURVEYS SHOW THAT A GROWING SHARE OF THE POPULATION IS LOSING CONFIDENCE IN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Whatever is the difficulty if we keep truly quiet the solution will come

THE MOTHER



Team's Gaffe

The country's youth aspiring for coveted professional careers are being traumatised by a corrupt examination system about which the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre appears to have been blissfully uncaring. It would be an understatement to say the government has played with the lives of hundreds of thousands of the nation's youth by allowing a dubious, corrupt system to have a field day. The ruling BJP has all these years behaved in a way as if the country's main concern is how to promote one religion and demonise another. The problems of joblessness, poverty, economic disparities between a microscopic minority of super rich and toiling masses forming the majority of the country's population has been totally ignored.

The cost of living crisis has been cleverly sidestepped by injecting communal thoughts into the body politic. After 10 years of continuous BJP rule the people seem to have finally woken up to the reality or the inanity of high-sounding rhetoric about progress and polarisation politics by preventing the BJP from getting a simple majority on its own. The message appears to be that enough is enough. But, how deep the rot has reached is now laid bare by the scandalous leak of question papers and other irregularities committed in holding the NEET-UG and UGC-NET exams.

The government has let the people down by allowing the Director General of the National Testing Agency (NTA) Subodh Kumar Singh to be at the helm for over a year when unscrupulous operators made a mockery of the two examinations through question paper leaks and other fraudulent acts. It is only after protests in several parts of the country and trenchant criticism by the Opposition over alleged irregularities in NEET-UG and the cancellation of UGC-NET that the Centre has removed him from his post. In a statement 22 June the Ministry of Personnel announced that Singh has been replaced by retired IAS officer Pradeep Singh Kharola. Kharola is the Chairman of the India Trade Promotion Organisation and has been given additional charge as DG of NTA "till the appointment of a regular incumbent or until further orders." The move was taken hours after the government constituted a committee which will give recommendations to improve the functioning of the agency and a day before around 1,500 students who had been given grace marks for NEET-UG were scheduled to take a retest. The CSIR UGC NET - scheduled to be held from 25 to 27 June – had also to be postponed due to "logistical reasons" and the NEET-PG exam, slated to be held 23 June, was rescheduled. Capping a day of fast-moving developments, the government handed over the probe into the alleged irregularities, including paper leaks, in the NEET-UG exam to the CBI. The agency is also probing the alleged leaks that led to the cancellation of UGC-NET. Everybody noticed how spokespersons of the Gov't of India pointedly denied there was any leakage of question papers till 2 days ago. The abrupt volte face was solely due to surfacing of unassailable facts that damned all the idiotic statements that were being repeated endlessly since election results were announced.

This is an old and too familiar game incompetent governments play by setting up committees to probe wrongdoings of colossal proportions and awaiting reports on overhauling the system. It is nothing but a dilatory tactic to let public fury subside and things go back to square one after a period of time since public will have other urgent issues to handle. Let no one believe the phrase 'public memory is short'. Recent elections proved that is not so.

The constitution of a seven-member committee to look at ways of improving the functioning of NTA also confirms the adage that one becomes wise after the event. The fact that the panel will be headed by a former ISRO chief, while board members will include some high profile professionals is poor consolation.

The damage has been done and hundreds of thousands of youth have been subjected to excruciating mental agony and the prospect of being cheated by undeserving candidates benefiting from question paper leaks. Government accountability has to be fixed and making a scapegoat of one or two individuals is not the answer. This is especially so when the Prime Minister had many a time in the past boasted that he has his "teams" which run the administration.

Wonder which 'Team' was responsible for this huge administrative gaffe.

Slavery Is Alive

A court in Switzerland has done something that would put our entire justice system to shame – it sentenced four members of the billionaire Hinduja family, the wealthiest in the UK, to up to four and a half years of imprisonment after finding them guilty of exploiting their domestic helps at their Geneva-based mansion. India-born mogul Prakash Hinduja and his wife Kamal, son Ajay and daughter-in-law Namrata were awarded the jail terms but were acquitted of human trafficking charges. Reacting to the judgement, the Hindujas said they were "appalled" by the ruling and have filed an appeal against it in a higher court.

Three Indian workers who were taken to Switzerland by the family claimed they were paid a pittance – between 200 and 400 Swiss francs per month and were made to work 18 hours a day. This is less than a tenth of the minimum wage in Geneva that is 4,426 Swiss francs. They also alleged that their passports were confiscated, and they were rarely allowed to leave the family's residence in Geneva's upscale Coligny neighbourhood. Shockingly, the prosecuting attorney Yves Bertossa pointed out that the family spent more on their pet dog than they did on their servants. In scathing remarks, Bertossa told the court: "They're profiting from the misery of the world." Despite going for an out-of-court settlement with the three workers who accused them, the Hindujas continue to face legal action due to the seriousness of the charges.

It is pertinent to note here that this is not the first time the family is in controversy. Decades ago, three Hinduja brothers – Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash – were linked to the infamous Bofors scam wherein the Swedish firm Bofors reportedly bribed Indian government officials and politicians over a defence deal. In October 2000, the CBI charged the three siblings with accepting kickbacks from Bofors to finalise a deal for acquiring howitzers for India. Nevertheless, the Delhi High Court dismissed the case in 2005 citing a lack of substantial evidence. With an estimated net worth of \$20 billion, the Hinduja family owns dozens of companies in sectors as diverse as oil and gas, heavy vehicles, healthcare, banking and financial services and has presence in 38 countries, employing about 2,00,000 people.

In the Hindujas case, that the super rich could be brought to book for their wrongdoings is unthinkable in a country like India, where the entire system is rigged in favour of the wealthy and the powerful. Had the three poor and reportedly illiterate Indians been equally exploited here they would not have got justice even in their wildest dream. This proves the existence of a flawless justice system in advanced Western democracies where even the rich and the powerful are not immune to legal action for their acts of omission and commission.

This whole episode points out another thing that Indians, whether rich or poor, have utter disregard for the law of the land. And such Indians who migrate to developed nations for greener pastures end up bringing infamy to the country because their base character remains the same.

For Indians it seems to be a respectful act to carry servants along with them wherever they go. This is not limited to Hinduja or just the ordinary rich people. Even India's diplomats do the same every time they get postings in foreign capitals. The case of Devyani Khobragade, an IFS officer, is well known. Currently she is India's ambassador at Phnom Penh, Cambodia but when she was in the Indian Mission at New York, her female domestic help from India had lodged a complaint against her for ill treatment and non payment of salary.

Slavery, it seems, is still safe and vibrant in India.

SPECTRUM STATISTICS

The good, the bad & the ugly

What public event has the active participation of 640 million people, with even a larger number of spectators? If you guessed the Indian general elections 2024, you are very correct. Nothing beats Indian elections from the perspective of drama, emotions, debates, and just "tamasha." At the end of the seven week long exercise in democracy, before the results of the elections were announced, an added dramatic element was the announcement of the exit poll results. Exit polls are developed using statistical sampling.

In 2024 elections, approximately 640 million people voted at more than a million voting booths. So, the task for pollsters is to determine a suitable sample to estimate how people have voted. Let us try to understand what can lead these estimates to be a true or incorrect reflection of the larger population they are attempting to describe.

The first issue to consider is the homogeneity of population. Let us take a simple example. Consider a large container of a liquid in which some sugar is completely dissolved. If we wished to estimate the percentage of sugar in the liquid, we

could take a small sample and evaporate the liquid to obtain the amount of sugar. The percentage of sugar in the sample should be the same as in the large container because sugar has been dissolved completely and evenly. This would be an example of a homogeneous distribution of sugar in the liquid.

Now, if instead of sugar that evenly dissolves in the entire liquid, we had a substance that partially dissolved in the liquid, while some of it remained suspended in a lumpy manner. The problem of estimating the percentage of this substance in the liquid becomes complicated. The percentage of the substance in one part of the liquid is not necessarily the same as in any other part. So, in order to draw a sample, or samples, which reflect the distribution of the substance in the liquid, we will need to have some idea of that distribution.

Now add several more substances that are distributed unevenly in the liquid, and you can begin to appreciate the complexity of taking samples of exit polls. People with different identities and political allegiance are unevenly distributed in the country. In ad-

dition, the allegiance of the voters' changes over time. This makes the task of taking a representative sample, or samples, all the more difficult.

The problem is compounded by the fact that what a pollster collects data on is not the number of seats won, but rather on the number of votes each political party is likely to receive. However, the relationship between vote share and the number of seats won is not straightforward. This can be seen in the fact that the BJP's vote share in 2024 election was only slightly below its vote share in 2019, 36.6% versus 37.3%, but it lost about 20% of its seats between 2019 and 2024 (303 to 240). The conversion of the estimated vote share percentage into the estimated number of seats won presents a major source of error.

A third major source of error in estimation is the reluctance of some voters to reveal how they voted. There could be several reasons for people refusing to respond to the pollster. They may be afraid that, if they voted against the expected majority party, they might be targeted for persecution. Or people may feel they do not wish to be bothered

by pollsters.

The reluctance of some people to participate in the polling process makes the sample non-random, which goes against the requirements for non-biased sampling. This can, and will, skew the results as it may exclude people who may have voted in one particular manner. Also, people in rural areas are wary of educated city folk asking questions and may even answer the questions incorrectly on purpose. This further exacerbates the problem.

While it is tempting to offer solutions to the problem of sampling, it is perhaps more meaningful to understand and accept that all statistics used in estimation have an inherent error. The more heterogeneous the population, the bigger the potential for error.

But I feel that what is required is also an education of the media and of the general public in terms of what they should reasonably expect from the estimates pollsters provide. Moreover, it is really so important to have an estimate of a count a couple of days before the actual count itself? Something for the nation to think about.

INFA



Rajiv Gupta

THE CONVERSION OF THE ESTIMATED VOTE SHARE PERCENTAGE INTO THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SEATS WON PRESENTS A MAJOR SOURCE OF ERROR

Telltale friendship

Sir, The telltale friendship between Moscow and Pyongyang was evident when Russian President Vladimir Putin embarked on his first visit to North Korea in 24 years. The two leaders have struck a comprehensive strategic partnership (CSP) to help smooth sailing of bilateral security, trade and investment. There is little doubt that Putin's North Korea visit has set alarm bells ringing in the US and other Western countries. Moscow direly needs help in its fight against Ukraine, and Pyongyang expects a rich haul of technological assistance from Moscow. What has worried the West is this technological expertise could provide a huge shot in the arm for Kim towards innovative weapons development to aid his massive military ambition. Also, the CSP envisages mutual help in case of aggression against one of the countries, and this is stemmed by near isolation of the two from the rest of the world.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Bilateral boost

Sir, The recent agreements and initiatives between India and Bangladesh amid Sheikh Hasina's visit mark significant progress in bilateral relations, addressing long-standing issues and enhancing cooperation across multiple sectors. The Teesta water-sharing project is a critical aspect of this cooperation, given the river's importance to both countries for irrigation and water supply. Resolving the Teesta dispute through joint management efforts underscores a commitment to equitable resource sharing, which is essential for regional stability and environmental sustainability. This collaborative approach could also set a precedent for resolving other transboundary water disputes in South Asia. The signing of 10 MoUs between India and Bangladesh spans diverse areas, including trade, technology, and cultural exchange. These MoUs are aimed at boosting economic cooperation, leading to increased bilateral trade, investment, and technological advancements. By formalising these collaborations, the agreements pave the way for private sector involvement and public-private partnerships, fostering economic growth and innovation in both countries. Enhanced cultural exchanges also strengthen people-to-people ties, promoting mutual understanding and trust. In the realm of defense and strategic cooperation, the agreements reflect a deepening of ties that includes access to Bangladesh's Mongla Port and enhanced power trade.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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UP BYPOLLS

PANCHAYAT POLLS

Tripura CPI(M) leader calls for unified Opposition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, June 23: Tripura CPI(M) leader Jitendra Chaudhury Sunday said the Left parties will pursue "local level" adjustments with the Congress and like-minded parties to take on the BJP in the three-tier panchayat elections likely to be held in August.

In last year's Assembly elections and the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, the CPI(M) had formed an electoral understanding with the Congress, but failed to defeat the saffron party and its allies.

Tripura Pradesh Congress president Asish Kumar Saha also supported this approach, stating there will be local-level adjustments between the Congress and Left parties in the panchayat elections



Earlier, Tripura Pradesh Congress president Asish Kumar Saha also supported this approach, stating there will be local-level adjustments between the Congress and Left parties in the panchayat elections.

Chaudhury said a delegation of Left parties will soon meet the state election commission to demand free, fair, and peaceful panchayat elections.

The Congress has already called for the facilitation of on-line nomination submissions in the rural polls, as opposition parties could not submit their pa-

pers in 90 per cent of panchayats in the last election.

Criticising the BJP-led government's alleged anti-people policies, the opposition leader said the CPI(M) will launch a statewide agitation at the district and subdivision levels to raise awareness.

"People living in rural areas are leading miserable lives. The government has shut down many schools when more educational institutions are needed. All these issues will be highlighted in the agitation to be held June 26 in Agartala," he said.

UP govt targets planting 35 crore saplings by 2027

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, June 23: The Uttar Pradesh government launched a statewide campaign to plant 35 crore saplings this year to expand the state's green areas, officials said here Sunday.

The campaign aims to meet the state's goal of increasing its green cover from 9 to 15 per cent by 2026-27.

The UP government has also directed that high-quality saplings are available for all stakeholders.

According to officials, all departments and 18 divisions of the state will plant saplings from next month.

All state departments are given specific goals to meet - Forest department to plant 140 million seedlings and the rural development 125.9 million.

Additionally, the Agriculture department has been given a target to plant 25 million seedlings, Horticulture department 15.5 million seedlings, Panchayati Raj department 12.8 million seedlings, Revenue department 10.6 million seedlings, Urban Development 3.5 million seedlings and Higher Education department 1.8 million seedlings.

The campaign aims to meet the state's goal of increasing its green cover from 9 to 15 per cent by 2026-27

The saplings will be planted on land owned by village panchayat, development authorities, industrial complexes, forest, Defence and Railway land as well as around expressways and canals.

Besides, grounds of medical and educational institution, government properties, and private land with the owner's approval will be encouraged for plantation.



Keen contest for 10 Assembly seats

While the by-election results will be numerically inconsequential for the ruling BJP in the State Assembly, it will impact the morale of both sides as any further losses to the BJP will help the SP and Congress to cement their gains

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, June 23: With the INDIA bloc making significant gains against the BJP in Uttar Pradesh (UP) in Lok Sabha polls, the by-elections in 10 Assembly seats that have fallen vacant are likely to witness a keen contest, with the ruling party under pressure to regain its hold.

The date for the by-elections has not been announced yet by the Election Commission. However, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress have announced that they will contest together under the INDIA bloc. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has also begun its preparations, according to their leaders.

The seats fell vacant after nine Assembly members including Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav were elected to Lok Sabha, while SP MLA from Sisamau MLA Irfan Solanki of Kanpur was disqualified after he was sentenced to jail in a criminal case.

UP Assembly Special Secretary Brajbhushan Dubey told PTI that information about the vacancy on 10 seats has been sent to the Election Commission.

"As per the procedure, by-elections can be held on these seats within six months," he said.

Five of these seats were won by the Samajwadi Party in 2022



THE SEATS FELL VACANT AFTER NINE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS INCLUDING SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV WERE ELECTED TO LOK SABHA WHILE SP MLA FROM SISAMAU MLA IRFAN SOLANKI OF KANPUR WAS DISQUALIFIED AFTER HE WAS SENTENCED TO JAIL IN A CRIMINAL CASE

While the by-election results will be numerically inconsequential for the BJP in the state Assembly, where it has a comfortable majority, they will impact the morale of both sides as any further losses to the BJP will help the Opposition SP and Congress to further cement their gains.

While the SP and the Congress

have expressed confidence that they will continue their winning streak, the BJP is also preparing to do "something special" in the by-elections to increase its "credibility", according to leaders.

BJP's state media in-charge Manish Dixit told PTI that the "NDA will contest the Assembly by-elections with full strength. There is no pressure anywhere, rather the NDA will fight the Assembly by-elections with full strength. BJP workers are always ready for public service and elections."

"The party will fight the elections will all its might and the re-

sult will be a special achievement," he said.

On the question of giving seats to alliance partners, he said, "The party leadership will decide this but at the level of organisation and government, we have started preparing for the elections with full enthusiasm."

When Samajwadi Party (SP) chief spokesperson and national secretary Rajendra Chaudhary was asked about it, he said, "Preparations for by-elections have been started on all the vacant seats and in alliance with the Congress party, we will fight the elections with full strength and win."

"The committee formed for management in the Lok Sabha elections is preparing for these 10 seats and national president Akhilesh Yadav will form a new committee for this after the Parliament session," he said.

Meanwhile, UP Congress Committee president Ajay Rai said that the "INDIA alliance will fight unitedly in the upcoming by-elections and soon the leaders of the alliance will meet and discuss the seats and election strategy."

A leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party said that its chief Mayawati has called a meeting of prominent leaders of all states in Lucknow Sunday, in which the strategy for the by-elections can also be discussed.

Tripura to merge low enrollment schools with nearby institutes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, June 23: The Tripura government has initiated an exercise to identify schools with a student strength of less than 50 and may merge them with nearby educational institutes, which have better enrolment, an official said Sunday.

The exercise, which has been taken up following the Centre's directive last month, is expected to be completed by the end of June, he said.

"As part of a plan to boost the learning system, the district education officers were asked to identify the government schools having a student strength of below 50 for merger with institutes having reasonably better enrolment," Officer on Special Duty (OSD), Education department, Kaliprasad Chakma told PTI.

The move is aimed at improving the student-teacher ratio, he said.

"After completion of the exercise, the government will consider all aspects and may merge these schools with ones situated preferably within 1 km or 1.5 km radius", he said.

According to Chakma, preliminary reports indicate that the state has 800 junior and senior basic schools with a student enrolment of less than 50.

In total, there are around 2,500 junior and senior basic schools



The plan has sparked Opposition, with critics claiming it will hurt poor and tribal students

in the state.

After the completion of the ongoing exercise, the department will seek the opinion of school management committees (SMCs) and local bodies and then submit a report to the government to make a necessary decision for the merger, he said.

"The objective of the move is to reorganise the student-teacher ratio at the primary level government schools. It has been found that three teachers are posted in a junior basic school which has only 13 students, while many schools are facing shortages of teaching staff. The problem of such distribution of teachers may be addressed by the

exercise", he said.

Responding to the move, the state's youth Congress leader Md. Shajahan Islam alleged that the BJP-led double-engine government has been forcing the poor students to get admission to private-run schools.

"The BJP government has failed to improve the education system in its six-year rule. We came to know that the Education department has initiated a process to close down 160 schools in West Tripura district alone, citing less-enrolment. Where will the poor students go? The youth Congress strongly protest the move", he said.

CPI (M)-backed Tribal Students' Union general secretary Sujit Tripura claimed that the government has been trying to shut down many schools in rural and tribal areas to deprive the tribal students of education.

Mayawati reinstates nephew as heir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, June 23: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Sunday declared nephew Akash Anand her successor and made him the party's national coordinator, reversing her own previous decision.

In the middle of the Lok Sabha elections May 7, she had termed Akash Anand immature and relieved him of the party post.

After a national level meeting at the BSP state office here Sunday, the party in a statement said it was handing Akash Anand his former responsibilities back.

"BSP's national president Mayawati has once again given Akash Anand a chance to work in the party with full maturity. He will continue to hold all his

posts in the party as before. That is, he will remain Mayawati's only successor along with being the party's national coordinator," the statement read.

Mayawati, a former Uttar Pradesh chief minister, said she is hopeful her nephew will emerge as a "mature" leader.

"I am hopeful about him (Akash Anand) that now he will definitely emerge as a fully mature leader at every level in the interest of his party and movement. The people of the party will also now encourage him by giving him more respect and honour than before. So that now he can live up to all my expectations in the future," she said in a statement.

The BSP chief had announced Akash Anand as her "successor"

in December last year. She revoked her decision after the third phase of Lok Sabha elections.

The former chief minister had then said that she had taken the decision in the interest of the party and the movement till Anand attained "full maturity".

Akash Anand was booked in a case of violation of the Model Code of Conduct for allegedly using "objectionable" language in an election rally in Sitapur.

The BSP, which contested the Lok Sabha elections on its own, did not win a single seat out of 80 seats in UP this time, while emerging Dalit leader and Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) chief Chandrashekhar Azad won the Nagina (reserved) seat in Bijnor district.



BSP supremo Mayawati with her brother Anand Kumar and nephew Akash Anand during party's office bearers' meeting to review results of general elections, at party office in Lucknow, Sunday

Queen pineapples gifted to Hasina

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, June 23: As a goodwill gesture, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha Sunday sent 500 kilograms of queen pineapples to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through the Akhura Integrated Check Post (ICP).

"At the initiative of Chief Minister Manik Saha, we have sent 500 kg of queen pineapples to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 100 packets. Each packet contains six pineapples weighing 750 grams each. This is the best pineapple variety in the world, assistant director of Horticulture department," Dipak Baidya, told reporters at Akhaura ICP near Agartala.

Asserting that the bond between India and Bangladesh is old and deep-rooted, Baidya said the "token gift" will further enhance the relationship.

Last year too, the Chief



Queen pineapple is considered the best pineapple variety in the world

Minister had sent pineapples to the Bangladesh PM, and Hasina reciprocated by sending mangoes to Saha.

Sarus crane population increases in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, June 23: The population of the Sarus crane, named the state bird of Uttar Pradesh in July 2015, has been increasing and the trend is expected to continue this year too, forest officials said.

The information has come after the first round of the two-day Sarus census.

In 2021, the Forest department survey counts put the Sarus crane figure at 17,329, 19,188 in 2022 and 19,522 in 2023 and the trend is expected to continue this year too.

Uttar Pradesh's principal chief conservator of forests, Sanjay Srivastav, said, "We carried out the first phase of the counting June 20 and 21 in the bird sanctuaries and forest areas where these birds frequent. The counts were recorded twice a day, in the morning and evening. Now



we will commence the second phase that comprises ground trooping by forest rangers, and forest officers who also inquire about Sarus sightings from the masses."

"The process is time-consuming as all the data needs to be collected from different dis-

tricts and ranges. That is why announcing the numbers may take a few more days," he added.

He said that it is expected that the Sarus crane numbers will go up this year as well.

Officials confirmed having recorded a marginal increase in bird population in the Meerut

and Bijnor forest divisions. In Meerut, 47 adult and 4 minor cranes were counted in the Malipur area of Bheekund wetland, Draupadi Ghat and Sikanderpur forest area of Hastinapur forest range while in the Bijnor division, a total of 146 adult and minor cranes were spotted during the survey, officials said.

These survey numbers indicated six new members had been increased in the Sarus cranes' population in the Meerut Forest division since the last survey in June 2023 and seven new members added in the Bijnor Forest division since the last survey in December 2023.

Sub-Divisional Officer of Bijnor Forest division, Gyan Singh, said that a maximum of 53 cranes were spotted in the Amargarh area, 37 in the Nagina forest range, 20 in Bijnor and Dhampur, 11 in Nazibabad and five in Chandpur.



The BJP government has ruined the future of the youth. The education and examination system has been completely ruined and handed over to the copying mafia

TERRORISM BREATHING ITS LAST IN J&K: MANOJ SINHA

Terrorism is breathing its last in Jammu and Kashmir and the recent acts of terror are signs of the "enemy's desperation", Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said Sunday.



of the day quote

The Modi government has removed the old laws having a slave mentality and made three new laws incorporating the basic spirit of Indianness and justice...

Now NEET-PG is also postponed. This is another unfortunate example of the education system that has been ruined under the rule of Narendra Modi

The people of Jalandhar West are with us. They are happy with the work of the AAP government but we (AAP) and the people here have been betrayed by the same person who disregarded the mandate of the people and joined an anti-Punjab party

NE FLOODS Shah suggests creation of large ponds

The Home Minister said the natural drainage system should be an integral part of the designs of road construction to deal with their inundation in case of floods



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Sunday said at least 50 large ponds should be created in the northeast to divert water of the Brahmaputra to help tackle floods and develop agriculture, irrigation and tourism.

Chairing a review meeting on preparedness for flood management during the monsoon, Shah also emphasised on optimum use of satellite imagery provided by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for flood and water management.

Shah said efforts should be made to upgrade the forecast system of water level of rivers for better flood management. He said at least 50 large ponds should be created in the northeast so that the water of the Brahmaputra can be diverted and stored in these ponds, according to an official statement.

Many people were killed, hundreds rendered homeless and communication lines and road networks snapped in Sikkim and Uttarakhand in the last few years following flash floods created due to the glacial lake outburst, which has become another major concern for the government during monsoon.

The home minister said the natural drainage system should be an integral part of the designs of road construction to deal with their inundation in case of floods.

Shah said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's disaster management is moving forward with a 'zero casualty approach'. He instructed the departments concerned to conduct a detailed study of the recent floods in Sikkim and Manipur and submit a report to the Union home ministry.

The home minister said flood monitoring centres of the Central Water Commission (CWC) should be in accordance with the requirements and of international standards.

Shah emphasised on the need to integrate weather, rainfall and flood warning related apps developed by various departments. He also reviewed long-term measures to formulate a comprehensive and far-reaching policy to mitigate the menace of floods in the country, the statement said.

Kejriwal moves SC over bail stay

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 23: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has moved the Supreme Court against the Delhi High Court's interim stay on a trial court's order granting him bail in a money-laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam.

The high court Friday paused the release of the embattled chief minister after the trial court granted him bail June 20.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) March 21, could have walked out of Tihar Jail Friday had the high court not granted the interim relief to the federal anti-money laundering agency.

"Till the pronouncement of this order, the operation of the impugned order shall remain stayed," a vacation bench of the high court said and asked the parties to file written submissions by June 24. The high court said it was reserving the order for two-three days as it wanted to go through the entire case records.



It also issued a notice to Kejriwal seeking his response to the ED's plea challenging the trial court's June 20 order by which he was granted bail. The court had listed the plea for hearing July 10.

In its bail order, the trial court had held that prima facie, Kejriwal's guilt was yet to be established and that the ED had failed to furnish direct evidence linking him to the proceeds of crime in the money-

laundering case.

The excise policy was scrapped in 2022 after the Delhi lieutenant governor ordered a CBI probe into alleged irregularities and corruption involving its formulation and execution.

According to the ED and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), irregularities were committed while modifying the policy and undue favours extended to the licence holders.

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SHORT TAKES

Naxalite killed in Dhamtari

Dhamtari: A Naxalite was gunned down by security forces in Chhattisgarh's Dhamtari district Sunday, a police official said. A gun battle broke out at 3:30 pm in a forest near Mukhot-Aamjhar villages under Khallari police station limits when a District Reserve Guard (DRG) team under Dhamtari Superintendent of Police Anjneya Varshney was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, the official said.

Drunk driving: 385 motorists held

Hyderabad: Telangana's Cyberabad Police have apprehended 385 motorists for drunk driving in a large-scale drive. Drunk driving tests were conducted at various locations under the limits of Cyberabad Police Commissionerate Saturday night. As many as 182 offenders were caught in the IT corridor alone. Police said all these caught will be produced before the court.

Vegetable prices skyrocket in Kolkata

Kolkata: Vegetable prices in Kolkata have skyrocketed following scanty rainfall in South Bengal. Some of the staple vegetable items whose prices have skyrocketed include eggplant, bitter melon, green chilly, cucumber, tomato, capsicum, beans, cauliflower and cabbage. While eggplant price ranges from between ₹120 and ₹150 a kilogram, the same for bitter melon is between ₹100 and ₹120. The price of green chilly, a must in cooking for any average Bengali family, is between ₹150 to ₹200 a kilogram. Cucumber, an essential salad item, is selling between ₹100 and ₹120 a kilogram.

Constable kills self

Nagpur: A 38-year-old police constable allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan at his residence in Nagpur on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, an official said. Vijay Chaware was found hanging from the ceiling fan by his wife, who is also a police personnel, in their residential quarters in Gittikhadan area. According to the police, Chaware returned from police recruitment drive duty on Saturday afternoon. He became upset after finding his wife not present in the house.

TN HOCH TRAGEDY

BJP hits out at INDIA bloc, seeks CBI probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: The BJP Sunday attacked the INDIA bloc over the hooch tragedy in Tamil Nadu, with Union minister Nirmala Sitharaman demanding that the Congress break its silence on the issue and "pull up" its ally DMK for the loss of lives in the incident.

The BJP also said it hopes the opposition alliance leaders who have not spoken on the issue will at least show repentance by gathering near the Mahatma Gandhi statue in the Parliament complex and observing a moment of silence for the victims. Union Finance Minister Sitharaman also demanded that the case be handed over to the CBI for investigation.

"You have no statement coming from Congress president (Mallikarjun Kharge) or the former Congress president (Rahul Gandhi), who rushes to the South seeking people's vote to win elections," she charged.

The ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu has had a hand in supporting those selling spurious liquor in the state, Sitharaman alleged. "The incident cannot be fully inquired into if the state government is dealing with the probe. And therefore I demand that this inquiry should be given to the CBI and immediate action should be taken to arrest those behind this," she told PTI. "I don't think justice will be served if inquiry and the whole matter is left only to the Tamil Nadu government," she added. Sitharaman said the Tamil Nadu government has shown "total incompetence" in handling the issue. The state government has not even allowed a discussion in assembly in this matter, she added.

L-G vows to tackle Delhi's water woes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena assured an AAP delegation that met him here Sunday over the water crisis in the city that he will try to resolve the issue.

During the meeting, the 10-member delegation highlighted that Delhi has been receiving 113 million gallons per day (MGD) less water than what it is entitled to, a statement said.

The delegation noted that Delhi's population increased from 1.1 crore in 1994 to three crore now while the amount of water it has been receiving remained the same and stressed for urgent action over the matter, it said. The L-G assured the delegation of his commitment to resolving the issue and making

every effort to ensure Delhi receives its fair share of water from Haryana, it said.

The delegation comprised 10 prominent AAP members, including Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and N D Gupta, General Secretary Pankaj Gupta, Cabinet Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj, and MLAs Dilip Pandey, Somnath Bharti, Rajesh Gupta and Rituraj Jha.

Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said, "We told the L-G that Delhi is getting the same amount of water today as was allocated for it in 1994. Whereas in the 30 years since 1994, Delhi's population has increased three times."

"We told him that ₹500 crore was spent on plugging leakages in canals while 12,000 kilometres of pipeline was laid in

together was reached," he said. Delhi Cabinet Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said a delegation of AAP leaders met the L-G and held a positive discussion. "We told the L-G that there is a shortage of about 113 MGD in the water coming from Haryana right now. Due to this, lakhs of people in Delhi are facing problems."

"Since LG is the representative of the central government, we have requested him to talk to the Haryana government and get Delhi its full share of water. On this, he has assured us that he will talk to the Haryana government and try to get Delhi its full share of water," he said.

The minister said they also told the L-G that it is likely to rain in a week.

Delhi is dependent on Uttar Pradesh and Haryana for drinking water. The AAP has claimed that Haryana has reduced the water supply to the national capital from 613 MGD to 513 MGD.



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Delhi. The Delhi government has made a lot of efforts at its level. During this, LG has also given some suggestions on which an agreement to work to-

3rd bridge collapses in Bihar in less than a week

Locals claimed the concretisation of the bridge was taking place late Saturday night. As soon as the concretisation was done, it collapsed.

AGENCIES

Patna, June 23: An under-construction bridge collapsed in Bihar's East Champaran district in the wee hours of Sunday.

The incident occurred in the Ghorasahan block in the district. The construction of the bridge was underway under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana with a cost of ₹1.59 crore. The 40-foot-long bridge was built between the Amwa village of Ghorasahan block and the Chainpur railway station.

Locals claimed the concretisation of the bridge was taking place late Saturday night. As soon as the concretisation was

done, it collapsed.

The bridge was built by Motihari's Dhiraj Construction Private Limited. The foundation stone of the bridge was laid by Rama Devi, former BJP MP of Sheohar, March 10 this year.

"The bridge is being constructed in two spans. The concretisation of the bridge was done from one side Saturday. After that, last night dozens of anti-social elements came at the construction site in some vehicles and broke the support of the bridge. Due to this, the bridge collapsed. The administrative officer has been informed about this," said SN Mandal, Executive Engineer, PWD Dhaka sub-division of East Champaran district.

Meanwhile, the villagers claimed that the material being used in the construction of the bridge was of low quality. The bridge is not being constructed as per the estimate. As a result, it collapsed along with the casting.



"The bridge collapsed due to the irregularities being done in the construction. A high-level investigation is needed here. The engineer is using low-grade materials for the construction of the bridge. This is the reason why the bridge collapsed," said Deepak Kumar Singh, a villager.

Earlier, a 30-foot-long bridge built on the canal of the Gandak

River in Siwan collapsed Saturday. That bridge was 40-45 years old. People said that the bridge collapsed due to soil cutting during the cleaning of the canal.

Last week, another bridge built with an estimated cost of ₹12 crore in the Sikti block of Araria collapsed before its inauguration.

THE STATE HAS BEEN WITNESS TO SEVERAL MISHAPS INVOLVING BRIDGES, LARGE AND SMALL, CONSTRUCTED OVER RIVERS AND OTHER WATER BODIES

THOUGH SUCH INCIDENTS HAVE NOT RESULTED IN CASUALTIES, THESE HAVE LED TO QUESTIONS BEING RAISED ON THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC WORKS

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national



Delhi is not getting its share of water as Haryana has shut all the gates of the Hathnikund barrage
ATISHI MARLENA | WATER MINISTER

RAHUL PENS EMOTIONAL LETTER

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Sunday wrote an emotional letter to the people of Wayanad, the constituency that he is giving up to represent Rae Bareilly in the Lok Sabha, and said when he faced abuse on a daily basis, their unconditional love protected him



of the day quote

The Congress used all kinds of tactics to prevent Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar from entering the Constituent Assembly. How can it talk about protecting the Constitution made by Ambedkar?
MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

We had a lead in 52 of the 81 assembly seats in Jharkhand in the parliamentary polls. The state played an important role in securing the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I congratulate the party leadership, booth workers and people of Jharkhand for the achievement
SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | BJP'S ELECTION IN-CHARGE FOR J'KHAND

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini is now trying to mislead the poor families by claiming the BJP gave people free plots
BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA | FORMER HARYANA CM

X POST OF THE DAY

First Govt cancelled the EXAMS! Now they are using Police to beat the students! India needs Educated Govt.
@ExamCancelled#NetScam

SHORT TAKES

Speeding car hits motorbike; 1 dead
Pune: A 19-year-old man was killed after a car allegedly driven by the nephew of an NCP MLA hit his motorbike on a highway in Maharashtra's Pune district. The accused, Mayur Mohite, was arrested after the incident Saturday, police said, adding the car was speeding on the wrong side of the road. Khed NCP MLA Dilip Mohite Patil termed the incident as unfortunate and said he will not support any wrongdoing.

Soldier killed in road accident
Hamirpur (HP): A serving soldier who was on leave died in a road accident when his bike collided head-on with a bus in Himachal's Hamirpur district Sunday, police said. The police identified the deceased as Suresh Kumar (37), a resident of Sujampur. According to police, Kumar was going from Sujampur to Bajrol when his bike collided with a bus coming from Hamirpur via Bajrol towards Jangalber. He was rushed to a hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival, police said.

INDIA MPs to march in Parliament today
New Delhi: Lok Sabha MPs from the INDIA bloc will assemble in the Parliament complex Monday morning and will march to the House together on the first day of the first session of 18th Lok Sabha, sources said. The MPs will gather near Gate No 2 of the old Parliament building, where the Gandhi statue once stood, a senior Opposition party leader said. The Gandhi statue, which was a popular protest site for MPs in the Parliament complex, was recently relocated along with 14 other statues that dotted the complex. All these were installed in one area, Prerna Sthal.

NEET-UG row: Only 813 of 1,563 candidates appear for retest

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 23: As many as 813 of the 1,563 candidates who were earlier awarded grace marks in the NEET-UG exam appeared for a retest Sunday, officials said.

The retest was conducted at seven centres. There was a controversy over grace marks awarded to students to make up for the loss of time at six centres where the NEET-UG examination started late May 5.

The Centre later told the apex court that the grace marks were being scrapped and these 1,563 students would be given an option to appear for a retest.

There were allegations that the grace marks led to inflation of marks and contributed to six of the grace mark candidates from the same centre in Haryana scoring a perfect 720 along with 61 others.

"At least 52 per cent - 813 out of 1,563 candidates - appeared for the retest Sunday. While no candidate appeared in Chandigarh, the number of candidates appearing from Chhattisgarh was 291, Gujarat one, Haryana 287 and Meghalaya 234," a senior National Testing Agency (NTA) official said.

The Bihar Police's Economic Offences Unit handed over a report to the Education Ministry Saturday, following which the Centre announced that the probe into alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG will be handed over



High-level panel to meet today

NEW DELHI: The Union education ministry's high-level panel for suggesting exam reforms and reviewing functioning of the National Testing Agency will meet Monday, sources said. Amid a row over irregularities in competitive exams, the ministry Saturday notified a seven-member panel headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations through the National Testing Agency (NTA).

to the CBI for a comprehensive investigation.

The Centre also ordered the removal of NTA DG Subodh Kumar Singh and put him on compulsory wait in DoPT till further orders.

The agency had earlier debarred 63 candidates for adopting unfair means in the exam. 30 additional candidates from Gujarat's Godhara were also debarred Saturday.

The NEET-UG examination

was held May 5 across 4,750 centres and around 24 lakh candidates appeared in it.

Meanwhile, the Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of Bihar Police stepped up its investigation into the NEET "paper leak" by arresting five more suspects Sunday, a day after their detention in Jharkhand's Deoghar, taking the total number of those apprehended to 18.

According to a statement by the EOU, the five arrested persons have been identified as Baldev Kumar, Mukesh Kumar, Panku Kumar, Rajeev Kumar and Paramjeet Singh, all hailing from Nalanda.

Baldev Kumar, associated with the notorious Sanjeev Kumar alias Lutan Mukhiya gang, allegedly received the solved answer sheet of the NEET-UG exam in PDF format on his mobile phone a day before the exam. The statement implicated members of the Mukhiya gang, accused of orchestrating multiple interstate paper leaks, as the source of the leaked answer sheet.

PRO-TEM SPEAKER ROW

Rijiju meets TMC's Sudip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju Sunday reached out to Trinamool Congress leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay on the eve of the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, amid a face-off with the Opposition INDIA bloc over the appointment of BJP leader Bhartuhari Mahtab as the pro-tem Speaker.

Rijiju's meeting with Bandyopadhyay came against the backdrop of the Opposition alliance's decision to pull out its members from the panel of chairpersons that will assist Mahtab in conducting the proceedings of the Lok Sabha till the election of the Speaker Wednesday. Bandyopadhyay, who was among the three Opposition members named to the panel of chairpersons in the Lok Sabha, told Rijiju that he would be unable to join the panel and stuck with the decision taken by the INDIA bloc. "Met Sudip Bandyopadhyayji, leader of All India Trinamool Congress Parliamentary Party. Sudip da has a long-standing Parliamentary career and he is known for his calm and dignified conduct in the Parliament. The 18th Lok Sabha will hugely benefit from his experiences," Rijiju said on X.

Earlier, President Droupadi Murmu had appointed Mahtab, a seven-term Lok Sabha member from Cuttack, as the Pro-tem Speaker. The President had also named Kodikunnil Suresh (Congress), T R Bалу (DMK), Radha Mohan Singh and Faggan Singh Kulaste (both BJP) and Bandyopadhyay to the panel of chairpersons to assist Mahtab.

ISRO completes its RLV tech demo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, June 23: Space agency ISRO Sunday said it has achieved a third consecutive success in the Reusable Launch Vehicle Landing Experiment by demonstrating the autonomous landing capability of the launch vehicle under more challenging conditions.

This mission simulated the approach and landing interface and high-speed landing conditions for a vehicle returning from space, reaffirming the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) expertise in acquiring the most critical technologies required for the development of a Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV), the space agency said.

The third and final test in the series of Landing Experiment (LEX-03) was conducted at 0710 IST at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) in Chitradurga, Karnataka.

Following the success of the RLV LEX-01 and LEX-02 missions, ISRO in a release said, RLV LEX-03 re-demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the RLV under more challenging release conditions (cross range of 500 m against 150 m for LEX-02) and more severe wind conditions.

The winged vehicle, named 'Pushpak', was released from

an Indian Air Force Chinook Helicopter at an altitude of 4.5 km from a release point 4.5 km away from the runway.

Pushpak autonomously executed cross-range correction manoeuvres, approached the runway and performed a precise horizontal landing at the runway centreline, it said.

Due to this vehicle's low lift-to-drag ratio aerodynamic configuration, the landing velocity exceeded 320 kmph, compared to

260 kmph for a commercial aircraft and 280 kmph for a typical fighter aircraft, it added.

ISRO said, after touchdown, the vehicle velocity was reduced to nearly 100 kmph using its brake parachute, after which the landing gear brakes were employed for deceleration and stop on the runway.

During this ground roll phase, Pushpak utilises its rudder and nose wheel steering system to autonomously maintain a stable and precise ground roll along the runway, it said.

Through this mission, the advanced guidance algorithm catering to longitudinal and lateral plane error corrections, which is essential for the future Orbital Re-entry Mission has been validated, the space agency noted.



SNIPPETS

Assam flood situation improves, over 2L hit

Guwahati: The flood situation in Assam improved Sunday as the number of people reeling under the deluge in eight districts decreased to over two lakh, an official bulletin said. According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), more than 2,07,500 people are hit by the flood in Bajali, Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang, Goalpara, Kamrup, Karimganj and Nalbari districts. Karimganj is the worst hit with over 1.1 lakh people suffering, followed by Cachar with almost 52,500 and Darrang with nearly 30,000 citizens reeling under floodwater, it added. Till Saturday, over 2.6 lakh people were suffering from the deluge in 11 districts of the state.

OR Kelu sworn in as minister in Kerala's LDF govt

Thiruvananthapuram: Senior CPI(M) leader and MLA OR Kelu was sworn in as a minister in the Left Front government in Kerala Sunday at Raj Bhavan here. Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office to the new minister. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, his cabinet colleagues, Left Legislators, Leader of Opposition V D Sathesnan and IUML leader P K Kunhalikutty, among others, were present. The family members of Kelu, who is an elected representative from Mananthavady constituency in Wayanad District, also took part in the ceremony.

Monsoon advances further into Gujarat

Ahmedabad: After making an early onset in parts of south Gujarat June 11 and making no progress for several days, the southwest monsoon Sunday advanced further into the state, said officials. Conditions remain favourable for the monsoon to cover some more parts of Gujarat and the adjoining north Arabian Sea in the next 3-4 days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in its forecast Sunday evening. "The southwest monsoon has advanced into some more parts of Arabian Sea, Gujarat state; remaining parts of Maharashtra; some more parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh; remaining parts of Odisha and some parts of Jharkhand," the IMD said in its weather bulletin.



Tourists arrive at Baralacha La Pass on Manali-Leh Highway after a fresh snowfall, Himachal Pradesh

Chinese telecom equipment seized from terrorists in J&K

THE SEIZURE OF THE MOBILE HANDSETS USED BY FOREIGN TERRORISTS, PRIMARILY FROM PAKISTAN AND ITS OCCUPIED KASHMIR, INDICATE THAT TERROR GROUPS ARE RECEIVING TRAINING, WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION FROM STATE ACTORS IN PAKISTAN, SAID THE OFFICIALS AWARE OF THE MATTER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, June 23: Encounters with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir have led to the seizure of highly encrypted Chinese telecom gear Ultra Set, an equipment used by the Pakistani army that has ended up in the hands of terror groups, officials said. This has also raised concerns over undetected infiltrations from across the Line of Control and terrorists potentially residing in the outskirts of cities and villages, they said.

These specialised handsets, exclusively customised by Chinese companies for the Pakistan army, were seized after a gunfight in the intervening night of July 17-18 last year in the Sindhara top area of Surankote in Jammu region's Poonch district and in April 26 this year after an encounter at the Check Mohalla Nowpora area of Sopore in north Kashmir's Baramulla



district. While four foreign terrorists were killed in the Surankote encounter, two were gunned down in Sopore.

The Ultra Set handsets, which have also been found in the south of the Pir Panjal region, combine cell-phone capabilities with specialised radio equipment that

located across the border, the officials said and added that the two Ultra Sets cannot reach out to each other. They said Chinese satellites are used to carry these messages that are compressed to bytes from the handset to the master server in Pakistan for its onward transmission.

This is yet another help being extended by China to its key ally Pakistan, the officials said. Beijing has been actively enhancing the defence capabilities of the Pakistani army along the LoC for quite some time now. This support includes the construction of steelhead bunkers, provisioning of unmanned aerial and combat aerial vehicles, installation of encrypted communication towers and laying of underground fibre cables.

In addition, Chinese radar systems such as those of the JY and HGR series have been deployed to improve target detection capabilities, while advanced

weaponry like the SH-15 truck-mounted howitzer has been observed at various locations along the LoC.

These efforts are perceived as reinforcing China's strategic interests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), particularly in connection with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Though the presence of senior People's Liberation Army (PLA) officials at forward posts was not detected, intercepted communications suggest that Chinese troops and engineers have been involved in infrastructure development along the LoC, including the construction of underground bunkers and tunnels in PoK's Leepa Valley.

These actions are believed to support the establishment of a direct route between the Gwadar Port in Pakistan and the Xinjiang province in China through the Karakoram Highway, a region under Chinese occupation.

Suraj Revanna held in sexual assault case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hassan (Karnataka), June 23: JD(S) MLC Suraj Revanna - the brother of former MP Prajwal Revanna who is facing allegations of sexually abusing several women - was arrested on Sunday on charges of "unnatural offences" against him, police sources said.

He was booked Saturday for allegedly sexually abusing a party worker a few days ago and has been booked under different sections of the IPC, including "unnatural offences." Suraj was questioned at CEN police station here overnight, before he was arrested, the sources said.

A 27 year-old man had complained to the police that Suraj Revanna, the eldest son of Holenarasipura MLA HD Revanna, sexually abused him at his farmhouse in Ghannikada June 16.

Based on the complaint, the Holenarasipura police registered a case against the JD(S) MLC under IPC sections 377 (unnatural offences), 342 (wrongful confinement) and 506 (criminal intimidation) late Saturday evening.

international



China also imports large amounts of gas and oil and China has already seen what has happened in Europe and Germany in the last two years. Without China it would not be possible to meet the climate targets globally
ROBERT HABECK | ECONOMY MINISTER, GERMANY

UPROAR OVER PIGEONS
A German town, Limburg an der Lahn, has voted to exterminate its entire population of pigeons, sparking a fight between the residents and animal rights activists



of the day quote

If we see that the challenges and threats increase, it means that we can correct something in (the doctrine) regarding the timing of the use of nuclear weapons and the decision to make this use
ANDREI KARTAPOLOV | FORMER ARMY OFFICER, RUSSIA

We stand firm. Our calm and peaceful disposition should not be mistaken for acquiescence. History itself can tell that we have never, never in the history of the Philippines yielded to any foreign power
FERDINAND MARCOS JR | PRESIDENT, THE PHILIPPINES

Sri Lanka's stance on the Gaza clashes would never change, action must be taken to set up an independent Palestine state within five years and murdering of civilians must stop
RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

SHORT TAKES

Fishermen held
Colombo: As many as 18 Indian fishermen were arrested for alleged illegal fishing in the island nation's waters by the Sri Lankan Navy and three fishing vessels were seized, a media report said Sunday. The fishermen were arrested from the North Sea near Delft Islands during a search operation conducted Saturday night, news portal The News First reported. Navy spokesperson Capt Gayan Wickramasuriya said the arrested fishermen would be taken to Kankasanturai fishing harbour for further legal proceedings.

PM Sunak in soup
London: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is Sunday dealing with yet another senior party official being involved in placing bets on the date of the general election before July 4 was confirmed, as the scandal engulfing his top aides continues to be investigated by the country's gambling watchdog. The British Indian leader, who has said he was "incredibly angry" on learning about the allegations that emerged earlier this month, now finds the Conservative Party's chief data officer also being investigated.

PML-N, PPP in sync
Islamabad: The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has accepted all the demands of its major ally over the federal budget and allocation of development funds, the Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari-led Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), a media report said Sunday. The agreement between the two allies came in the third round of talks between the negotiation committees of the two parties, Geo News reported.

Netanyahu reiterates US arms delay claim

Israeli PM tells the Cabinet that he was driven to release a video in English last week after weeks of unsuccessful pleas with American officials to speed up deliveries

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tel Aviv, June 23: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet Sunday that there had been a "dramatic drop" in US weapons deliveries for Israel's war effort in Gaza, doubling down on a claim that the Biden administration has denied and underscoring the growing strains between the two allies. Netanyahu told his Cabinet that the drop had occurred four months ago, without specifying which weapons, saying only that "certain items arrived sporadically but the munitions at large remained behind."

The spat highlights how high tensions have surged between Israel and Washington over the war in Gaza, particularly surrounding the Israeli military's conduct in the beleaguered territory and the harm to civilian life there. President Joe Biden has delayed delivering certain heavy bombs since May over those concerns, but his administration fought back last week against



Netanyahu's charges that other shipments had also been affected. Netanyahu told the Cabinet that he was driven to release a video in English last week after weeks of unsuccessful pleas with American officials to speed up deliveries. He said a resolution appeared close. "In light of what I have heard over the past day, I hope and believe that this matter will be solved soon," he said, without elaborating. Netanyahu's video last week sparked uproar among critics in Israel and was met with denial

Iran-backed fighters offer to join Hezbollah

Thousands of fighters from Iran-backed groups in the Middle East are ready to come to Lebanon to join with the militant Hezbollah group in its battle with Israel if the simmering conflict escalates into a full-blown war, officials with Iran-backed factions and analysts say. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said in a speech Wednesday that militant leaders from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries have previously offered to send tens of thousands of fighters to help Hezbollah, but he said the group already has more than 100,000 fighters.

and confusion from White House officials. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the US was "perplexed" by Netanyahu's claims. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, "We generally do not know what he's talking about."

His remarks came hours after Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant traveled to Washington for meetings with senior officials. A statement from Gallant's office said he would discuss "maintaining Israel's qualitative edge in the region" but made no mention of the weapons issue.

Biden has felt pressure from progressive Democrats to take a tougher line against Israel, and he has sharpened his warnings to Netanyahu over military tactics in the Gaza Strip. But after threatening to impose a more sweeping ban on arms transfers over an assault on Rafah, the administration has avoided any suggestion that Israel's expanding push into the southern Gaza city has crossed a red line.

Israeli forces strap Palestinian to jeep

Israeli army forces strapped a wounded Palestinian man to the hood of a military jeep during an arrest raid in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin Saturday. The Israeli military in a statement said Israeli forces were fired at and exchanged fire, wounding a suspect and apprehending him. According to the family of Azmi, the wounded man, there was an arrest raid, and he was injured during the raid, and when the family asked for an ambulance, the army took Mujahed, strapped him on the hood and drove off.



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, a Long March-2C rocket carrying an astronomical satellite, the Space-based Multi-band Variable Object Monitor (SVOM), blasts off from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwestern China's Sichuan Province

RISING CHINA THREAT

Taiwan war games to mimic combat as closely as possible

REUTERS

Taipei, June 23: Taiwan's annual war games this year will be as close as possible to actual combat, no longer just putting on a show to score points but aiming to simulate real fighting given a rapidly rising "enemy threat" from China, a senior official said.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its territory, has been staging regular exercises around the island for four years to pressure Taipei to accept Beijing's claim of sovereignty, despite Taiwan's strong objections.

Taiwan starts its five-day Han Kuang exercises July 22. A senior Taiwan defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity to be able to speak more freely, said there was an urgent need to rethink how the drills were conducted. "In recent years, the enemy



threat has changed rapidly," the official said. "Our defence combat plan must also be continuously revised on a rolling basis, and the urgency of comprehensive combat training is becoming more and more important." Elements that were mostly for show, like rehearsal drills, have been cancelled, while this year there will be night time exercises and, unusually, the capital Taipei will be included too, the official said. "It's not about scoring points," the official said. "We want the soldiers to wonder whether this is for real." Things may go wrong, like ve-

TACKLING TERRORISM

Pak okays Frontier Constabulary in PoK

THE PROTESTS AND THE DETERIORATING LAW AND ORDER SITUATION HAVE PROMPTED THE PoK GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE DEPLOYMENT CALL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, June 23: Pakistan's federal government Sunday approved the deployment of the paramilitary force Frontier Constabulary in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) which was rocked by protests last month, during which several people were killed.

As many as six platoons of the paramilitary force will be deployed in the region for three months, Geo News reported. The decision to deploy the Frontier Constabulary comes a day after Pakistan announced to launch a major new operation against terrorism with a renewed commitment.

The protests, against inflation and high electricity prices, were led by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) and had traders at the forefront in most parts of the region. "The development came after

the 'Prime Minister' of the disputed region Chaudhry Anwarul Haq met with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi," Geo News reported.

During the meeting, the two leaders reportedly discussed the law and order situation, the prevailing political landscape, as well as the disputed region's budget for the next fiscal year.

As many as six platoons of the Frontier Constabulary will be deployed in the region for three months and would provide fool-proof security for Neelum-Jhelum, Mangla and Gulpur hydro-power projects, apart from assisting the police.

Multiple people, including a policeman, died and dozens were injured during the four-day protests in mid-May that rocked PoK as protesters sought the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class.

The protests and the deteriorating law and order situation had prompted the PoK government to call in Pakistan Rangers to control the situation then.

Pakistan Saturday announced to launch Operation Azm-i-Istehkam (strong commitment), against terrorism with a renewed commitment to eradicate militancy from the country. The decision was taken at the apex committee of the National Action Plan (NAP).



Yemen's Houthis claim attack on four ships at Israel's Haifa port

REUTERS

Cairo, June 23: Yemen's Houthis said early Sunday that they had conducted a joint military operation with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq militant group, targeting four ships at Israel's northern Haifa port.

The Houthi military spokesperson, Yahya Saree, said in a televised statement that the two groups launched a drone attack on two cement tankers and two cargo ships at the Haifa port Saturday.

He said the ships belonged to companies that "violated the ban on entering the ports of occupied Palestine".

The Israeli military did not immediately comment, though it had previously denied a similar claim by the Houthis early this month.

Saree also said the Houthis had attacked the Shorthorn Express in the Mediterranean using drones as part of the group's campaign to disrupt shipping in key waterways, which they say is an act of solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza war.

"The two operations successfully achieved their objectives, and the strikes were precise and direct," Saree said.

The Iran-aligned Houthis first launched drone and missile strikes in shipping lanes in November. In dozens of attacks, they have sunk two vessels, seized another and killed at least three seafarers.

Meanwhile, the US forces claimed to have destroyed three Iranian-backed Houthi uncrewed surface vessels in the Red Sea in the past 24 hours, the US Central Command said Saturday.

Separately, the Houthis launched three anti-ship ballistic missiles into the Gulf of Aden but there were no injuries or significant damage reported by US, coalition, or merchant vessels, CENTCOM added.

Kenya protests: Gen Z shows the power of digital activism

Nationwide demonstrations have erupted in Kenya over a controversial tax bill. The Finance Bill 2024, initially presented to parliament in May, has sparked discontent with an increase in an array of taxes and levies for Kenyans. The mass protests, initially organised in the capital city, Nairobi, have spread across the country. Demonstrations have taken place in almost every city and major town. Digital media and activism expert Job Mwaure shares his insights into how the protests were mobilised on online, and then onto the streets. **How are Kenyans using the digital space in this movement?** This is a powerful moment for digital activism. The protests

have seen significant participation from young Kenyans who are using digital media to organise and voice their opposition.

A great number of those driving the protests are Generation Z (often referred to as Gen Z), individuals born roughly between the late 1990s and early 2010s and characterised by digital prowess and social consciousness. They have created this organic, grassroots movement which has used platforms, like social media, to mobilise and coordinate efforts quickly.

In the current protests, we are seeing just how innovative activists can be when using digital media. The digital tools and strategies employed today are taking activism to an entirely

new level. They showcase a sophistication and reach that would've been hard to imagine.

They have deployed a number of old and new strategies. Among the new has been Artificial Intelligence (AI) which has been used to create images, songs and videos that amplify the movement's messages and reach a wider audience.

AI was also used to help educate wider audiences on the bill. Developers, for instance, created specialised GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) models designed to answer questions on the finance bill.

Platforms, like TikTok and X are being used to share videos of people explaining the finance bill in various Kenyan dialects.



Hashtags, such as #OccupyParliament and #RejectFinanceBill2024, trended on social media platforms for several days, further highlighting the power of digital activism in mobilising support and maintaining the momentum of the protests.

And then there has been very successful crowdfunding through digital platforms. This has enabled supporters to send money for transportation, allowing more people to join the protests in Nairobi's central business district.

Another has been the use of hacking of government websites, disrupting services and drawing attention to their cause.

Personal information, such as the phone numbers of political leaders, were leaked to allow protesters to spam them with SMS and WhatsApp messages. This forced the office of the data protection commissioner to issue a statement warning them to stop.

Activists have also created a website featuring a "wall of shame" that lists politicians who support the Finance Bill. This helped the protesters increase pressure on parliamentarians to potentially change their stance. Some constituents are taking steps to recall their MPs.

THE CONVERSATION

of the day quote

India has quite an evolved auto market... On the EV side, the penetration right now lags the rest of the world... The (overall) penetration of EVs in India is something like 6 per cent and we see it quite easily expand, double and more than double quite quickly

ABHINAV SINHA | MD AND HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY & TELECOMS, BRITISH INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT

There are challenges related to gaining better market access for Indian agricultural products like shrimp, rice, steel, pharmaceuticals, and services in South Korea. Indian businesses seek more favourable terms to compete effectively in these sectors

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

India is a very important market and I am saying obviously because of the domestic potential which we have... but I also think the role that India could play for the world for Signify is becoming far more important

SUMIT JOSHI | VC AND MD, SIGNIFY INNOVATIONS

SHORT TAKES

Steel plant in Saudi: Essar awaits nods

New Delhi: Essar Group is awaiting final approvals to start investing about \$4.5 billion in building a low-carbon steel plant in Saudi Arabia, its top official Prashant Ruia said. The approvals are expected anytime now, after which the conglomerate will start working on the 4 million tonne per year steel plant along with port facilities at Ras Al-Khair in Saudi Arabia. "We still haven't got all the final approvals," Ruia, director of Essar Capital, which manages the group's portfolio of investments, said in an interview with PTI. The plant will meet domestic steel demand in Saudi Arabia. "Saudi Arabia is going through a large growth phase, a large part of steel today is getting imported into Saudi Arabia. So this is basically a domestic plant," he said.

2nd rights issue: Byju's moves HC

New Delhi: Edtech company Byju's, mired in several controversies amid a cash crunch, has moved the Karnataka High Court against the order of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which restrained it from going ahead with its second rights issue. The second rights issue commenced May 13 and was expected to end June 13. The edtech company has been restrained from utilising any funds from the second rights issue by the NCLT. The company's fresh plea in the Karnataka High Court is likely to come up for hearing Monday, according to sources.

BoB to double tech team headcount

Mumbai: State-owned Bank of Baroda is aiming to double its in-house technology team headcount to 3,000 in the next two years, a top official has said. The new additions to the current team strength of 1,500 employees will be done both through the regular hiring processes and lateral hires of specialist talent, Debajyoti Chandra, its managing director and chief executive officer told PTI recently. "In the next two years, we will double the number of people in our IT team," Chandra said after the announcement of its March quarter earnings. Recently, the Reserve Bank of India has taken stringent action on banks for shortfalls in technology architecture which impacted the ability to execute transactions.



AI will, with people, replace people... It's not just AI replacing people. You still need humans in the loop
ROHIT TANDON | AI EXECUTIVE, DELOITTE

TALKS ON TO UPGRADE INDIA-KOREA FTA

With talks to upgrade the existing free trade agreement (FTA) moving forward between India and Korea, the department of commerce is engaging with different ministries, including heavy industries, steel, and chemicals, to prepare the offer list, an official said



Rescue call for ONGC's gas field

AFTER 7 YEARS AND \$1.2BN INVESTMENT, ONGC OFFERS STAKE IN DEEN DAYAL GAS FIELD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: After spending close to \$1.2 billion and seven years of little success, state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is seeking partners to rescue the Deen Dayal gas field in the KG basin in Bay of Bengal.

ONGC June 12 sought expression of interest from "global oil and gas companies with requisite technical expertise and financial strength to join as partner (with participative interest) for firming up a viable strategy" for the field, according to the tender document.

The field has produced negligible quantities of gas since ONGC in January 2017 acquired Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation's (GSPC) 80 per cent interest in the KG-OSN-2001/3 block off the east coast of India.

The block contains the Deen Dayal West (DDW) gas/condensate field which was discovered



The field, which was initially said to hold up to 20 trillion cubic feet of in place gas reserves - by far the biggest in any deep-sea field in the country - but later trimmed to a tenth, has proved to be tougher than anticipated

by GSPC almost two decades back. The Gujarat government company had showcased the field as a promising prospect when it sold its stake to ONGC in order to cut its debt

"A total of seven development wells are drilled till date," ONGC said in the tender document. A development well is one that helps produce hydrocarbon from below the earth's surface

or seabed.

"However, four wells which were completed did not yield good productivity as anticipated and performance was sub-optimal. Severe technical challenges and complications were encountered in the other three wells during drilling and completion phase and had to be abandoned," ONGC said.

The company now wants a

- 7 DEVELOPMENT WELLS ARE DRILLED TILL DATE
- STAKE SALE BIDS ARE DUE BY SEPTEMBER 12

global partner who could help with the development of DDW. Besides the acquisition cost, ONGC has spent undeclared sum of money in trying to bring the DDW field to production.

GSPC holds 10 per cent stake in the field and the remaining is with Jubilant Enpro.

The KG-OSN-2001/3 block, which was awarded to GSPC and its partners in the first bid round of New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) brought by the then NDA government under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, comprises five fields - DDW, DDE, DDN, DD-DT and DD-BRU. Of these, DDW, which lies about 10 km off the Andhra Pradesh coast, is spread over 37.5 square kilometers and is under development.

DDW already has a well head platform with 16 well slots, a process platform that has capacity to process 5.66 million standard cubic meters per day of gas, and a subsea pipeline to take the gas to an onshore terminal.

ONGC said the reservoirs in the field are classified as high

pressure high temperature (HP-HT). "The in place reserves are to the tune of 55 billion cubic meters (1.94 Tcf) of gas."

The company intends to undertake a revision of the field development plan that was previously submitted to authorities.

"Considering the technology challenges associated with the field and costs involved, ONGC would like to seek technical expertise to firm up a way forward for future development," the tender document said.

Bids are due by September 12.

When ONGC acquired GSPC stake, it had reasoned that it would be able to use facilities such as process platform as well as subsea pipeline to bring to production Cluster-1 discoveries in its neighbouring KG-DWN-98/2 or KG-D5 block. Also, the KG-OSN-2001/3 block infrastructure was supposed to be a back-up option for Cluster-II discoveries in KG-D5 in case of disruptions, he said.

But the company never used the facilities and instead built new ones on KG-D5 block.

According to the field development plan that GSPC submitted to the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons in 2009, DDW was to produce 200-300 million cubic feet a day. Output however has been a fraction of that.

Adani draws ₹9.26cr salary in FY24, lower than executives, peers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: India's second richest person Gautam Adani received a total remuneration of ₹9.26 crore in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024, lower than most industry peers as well as his own key executives.

Adani, 61, drew salary from only two out of the 10 companies in his ports-to-energy conglomerate, annual reports of the 10 listed entities of the group showed.

His remuneration for 2023-24 from the group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) included ₹2.19 crore salary and perquisites, allowances and other benefits worth ₹27 lakh. The total remuneration of ₹2.46 crore was 3 per cent more than the previous financial year, according to AEL's 2023-24 annual report. Besides, he drew ₹6.8 crore from Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd.

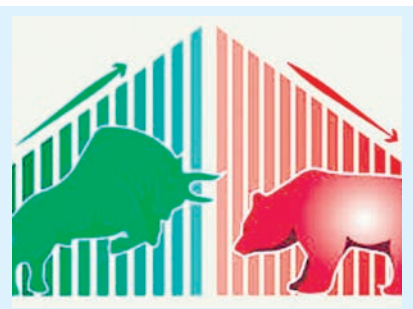
Adani's salary is lower than heads of almost all large family-owned conglomerates in India.

While the richest Indian, Mukesh Ambani has been foregoing his entire salary since Covid-19 broke out prior to which he had capped his remuneration at ₹15 crore, Adani's remuneration is much lower than telecom czar Sunil Bharti Mittal (₹16.7 crore in 2022-23), Rajiv Bajaj (₹53.7 crore), Pawan Munjal (₹80 crore), L&T Chairman S N Subrahmanyam and Infosys CEO Salil S Parekh.

MARKET OUTLOOK

Monsoon, Budget, US GDP data key factors to watch this week

Last week, Sensex and Nifty both posted minor gains of 0.20% but it was the third consecutive week when benchmark indices closed with the gains



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, June 23: The outlook of the Indian markets will be guided by monsoon updates, any upcoming budget-related announcements, marco cues, and global factors like US GDP data this week.

Last week, Sensex and Nifty both posted minor gains of 0.20 per cent but it was the third consecutive week when benchmark indices closed with the gains.

On the domestic front, key factors to watch will be the progress of the monsoon, FIIL and DII fund flows, and crude oil prices.

On the global front, economic data like the US Q1 GDP data and the US core PCE price index will be released June 27 and 28 respectively. The movement of the dollar index and US bond yields will be crucial.

Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst at Swastika Investmart

said that this week, sector-specific movements are anticipated amid budget-related buzz.

"Key factors to watch include the progress of the monsoon, which will be closely monitored for its near-term impact on investor confidence," he said.

Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, of Master Capital Services said that in the Nifty index, consolidation persisted for last week, culminating in a weekly close with a minor gain of 35.50 points.

"Daily chart analysis indicates that Nifty has been consolidating within a broad range of 23,400 to 23,700, and this trend is likely to continue," he said.

Pravesh Gour added that on the derivatives front, the long exposure of FIILs in index futures stands at 57 per cent, whereas the put-call ratio is sitting at the 1.04 mark, both of which point to a bullish tilt in the market.

Now, taxpayers can amend sales return form before GST payment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: GST taxpayers will now have the option to amend outward supply or sales return form GSTR-1 before payment of taxes for a month or quarter.

The GST Council in its meeting Saturday had recommended providing a new optional facility by way of Form GSTR-1A to facilitate taxpayers to amend the details in Form GSTR-1 for a tax period and/or to declare additional details.

GSTR-1A will, however, have to be filed before filing of return in GSTR-3B for the said tax period.

This will facilitate the taxpayer to add any particulars of supply of the current tax period missed out in reporting in form GSTR-1 of the said tax period or to amend any particulars already declared in GSTR-1 of the current tax period (including those declared in IFP for the first and second months of a quarter; if any, for quarterly taxpayers), to ensure that correct liability is auto-populated in GSTR-3B.

Currently, GST taxpayers file outward supply return GSTR-1 by the 11th day of the subsequent month. Taxpayers with an annual turnover of up to ₹5 crore can file GSTR-1 quarterly within the 13th day of the end of



the quarter.

Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co Partner Rajat Bose said this is a positive change recommended by the council from a compliance perspective and will facilitate ease of doing business.

Abhishek Jain, Indirect Tax Head & Partner, KPMG, said allowing revision of filings made in GSTR-1 is a good move to rectify clerical and inadvertent errors before the payment of taxes and curtailing unwarranted notices for reconciliation of disclosures in GSTR-1 and payment of taxes vide GSTR-3B.

"It'll be interesting to see the mechanism for a population of GSTR-2B for the recipient and the time gap available to the recipient for reconciling credits," Jain added.

BDO India Indirect Tax Partner Maulik Manakiwala said the introduction of Form GSTR-1A to report particulars which were missed during the submission of GSTR-1 indicates that through proactive consul-

Centre may prepay loans taken during Covid-19 for states

The central government may be able to repay ₹2.69 lakh crore loans it had taken to compensate states for GST revenue loss in FY21 and FY22 by November 2025, four months ahead of its scheduled repayment, an official has said. The full repayment of the market borrowings is expected earlier than the previously calculated timeline of March 2026. The issue is expected to be taken up for discussion in the next meeting of the GST Council in August, the official added. The compensation cess was initially brought in for five years to make up the revenue shortfall of states, following the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The compensation cess expired in June 2022, but the amount collected through the levy is being used to repay the interest and principal of the ₹2.69 lakh crore that the Centre had borrowed during Covid-19.

tation with industry, the government's intention is to simplify GST law and ease compliances for the assessee.

The GST Council also recommended that taxpayers having aggregate annual turnover up to ₹two crore are exempt from filing annual returns in form GSTR-9/9A for the FY 2023-24.

Beyond Nvidia: The search for AI's next breakthrough

Amid the champagne popping, startups seeking the attention of Silicon Valley venture capitalists are being asked to innovate -- but without a clear indication of where the next chapter of AI will be written

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, June 23: For a few days, AI chip juggernaut Nvidia sat on the throne as the world's biggest company, but behind its staggering success are questions on whether new entrants can stake a claim to the artificial intelligence bonanza.

Nvidia, which makes the processors that are the only option to train generative AI's large language models, is now Big Tech's newest member and its stock market takeoff has lifted the whole sector.

Even tech's second rung on Wall Street has ridden on Nvidia's coattails with Oracle, Broadcom, HP and a spate of others seeing their stock valuations surge, despite sometimes shaky earnings.

When it comes to generative

AI, doubts persist on what exactly will be left for companies that are not existing model makers, a field dominated by Microsoft-backed OpenAI, Google and Anthropic.

Most agree that competing with them head-on could be a fool's errand.

Some have tried to build applications that use or mimic the powers of the existing big models, but this is being slapped down by Silicon Valley's biggest players.

"What I find disturbing is that people are not differentiating between those applications which are roadkill for the models as they progress in their capabilities, and those that are really adding value and will be here 10 years from now," said venture capital veteran Vinod Khosla.

The tough-talking Khosla is



one of OpenAI's earliest investors.

"Grammatically won't keep up," Khosla predicted of the spelling and grammar checking app, and others similar to it.

He said these companies, which put only a "thin wrapper" around what the AI models can offer, are doomed.

One of the fields ripe for the taking is chip design, Khosla said, with AI demanding ever

more specialized processors that provide highly specific powers.

"If you look across the chip history, we really have for the most part focused on more general chips," Rebecca Parsons, CTO at tech consultancy Thoughtworks, told AFP. Providing more specialized

processing for the many demands of AI is an opportunity seized by Groq, a hot startup that has built chips for the deployment of AI as opposed to its training, or inference - the specialty of Nvidia's world-dominating GPUs.

Groq CEO Jonathan Ross told AFP that Nvidia won't be the best at everything, even if they are uncontested for generative AI training.

"Nvidia and (its CEO) Jensen Huang are like Michael Jordan... the greatest of all time in basketball. But inference is baseball, and we try and forget the time where Michael Jordan tried to play baseball and wasn't very good at it," he said.

Another opportunity will come from highly specialized AI that will provide expertise and know-how based on proprietary data which won't be co-opted by voracious big tech. "Open AI and Google aren't going to build a structural en-

gineer. They're not going to build products like a primary care doctor or a mental health therapist," said Khosla.

Profiting from highly specialized data is the basis of Cohere, another of Silicon Valley's hottest startups that pitches specifically-made models to businesses that are skittish about AI veering out of their control.

"Enterprises are skeptical of technology, and they're risk-averse, and so we need to win their trust and to prove to them that there's a way to adopt this technology that's reliable, trustworthy and secure," Cohere CEO Aidan Gomez told AFP.

When he was just 20 and working at Google, Gomez co-authored the seminal paper "Attention Is All You Need," which introduced Transformer, the architecture behind popular large language models like OpenAI's GPT-4.

The company has received funding from Nvidia and Salesforce Ventures and is valued in the billions of dollars.

I don't think that there's a great opportunity to start a foundational AI company at this point in time

MIKE MYER | FOUNDER AND CEO, QUIQ

Stunning Afghan show

AUSTRALIA SUFFER SHOCK DEFEAT TO AFGHANISTAN BY 21 RUNS IN SUPER 8 GAME



Gulbadin Naib and Rahmanullah Gurbaz (with gloves) are all pumped up after the dismissal of Glenn Maxwell AP PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kingstown, June 23: Afghanistan pulled off an upset of epic proportions Saturday with a shock 21-run win over mighty Australia in the T20 World Cup with Gulbadin Naib's (4/20) brilliant bowling upending Pat Cummins' hat-trick to produce one of most memorable days in Afghan cricket.

Using the slower balls smartly on a difficult batting wicket, Afghanistan defended their total of 148 for six for their first-ever win over Australia in international cricket. Australia were all out for 127 in 19.2 overs in the Super 8 contest and they are now staring at early elimination from the World Cup. Australia now must

Unique feat by Cummins

Kingstown: Australia pacer Pat Cummins has become the first bowler to register back-to-back hat-tricks at the T20 World Cup during his team's Super 8 game against Afghanistan here. "Crazy to get two in a row after playing 100+ games for Australia," Cummins said at the innings break. He had picked his first-ever hat-trick in the game against Bangladesh, removing Mahmudullah, Mahedi Hasan and Towhid Hridoy across the 18th and 20th overs.

win Monday their match against India and also hope that Afghanistan lose to Bangladesh in their next match.

Afghanistan openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (60, 49b, 4x4, 4x6) and Ibrahim Zadran (51, 48b, 6x4) forged a 118-run partnership setting up base for a challenging total but Cummins registered his second successive

hat-trick spread across two overs to restrict Afghanistan to a manageable total.

Australia were reduced to 32 for three in the power play but Glenn Maxwell slammed a 41-ball 59 (6x4, 3x6) to somewhat resurrect the chase. However Naib's timely strikes proved crucial in toppling the 2021 champions.

"It's massive win for us as a

team and as a nation. Great feeling. It's something we missed in last two years. Really happy with the win and super proud of the guys," Afghanistan skipper Rashid Khan said at the post-match presentation.

"The way Gulbadin bowled today - the experience he has, it came good today. The way Nabi started - the wicket of Warner - was also pleasing to see. It's so important for us back home and around the world. I'm sure they're proud and would've enjoyed the game," Rashid added.

Defending 149 on a spin-friendly wicket, Afghanistan had the perfect start as Navendu-Haq (3/20) picked up two early wickets.

Naib then struck twice to give Afghanistan hope as he surprised Marcus Stoinis with a bouncer which the batter top-edged to find Gurbaz behind the stumps. He next trapped Tim David as Australia slipped to 85 for 5 in the 13th over.

Maxwell slammed a six off Rashid and Naib in the 12th and 13th overs to keep Australia's chase on track. Naib returned to pick his most prized cap, dismissing the dangerous Maxwell in the 15th over and then Rashid removed Matthew Wade as Australia's chase fell apart.

Earlier, Gurbaz and Ibrahim notched up their third century staked of this T20 World Cup with a 118-run partnership. The duo capitalised on their chances as Australia had to wait till the 16th over for their first breakthrough. Looking for big hits, Afghanistan lost wickets thereafter with Cummins dismissing Rashid, Karim Janat and Naib to become the first player to pick up two hat-tricks in T20 World Cups.

Men in Blue determined to maintain winning streak



X-FACTOR: Rohit Sharma celebrates with Hardik Pandya after the dismissal of a Bangladesh batter Saturday PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gros Islet (Saint Lucia), June 23: India will be out to derail Australia's T20 World Cup campaign when they take on their shocked and under-pressure opponents in their final Super 8 game here Monday. A third straight win for India will not only make them the group toppers and send them to the semi-finals, but will also substantially threaten Australia's chances of progressing through to the semi-finals following the unexpected loss to Afghanistan Saturday night. Australia will also have to depend on the result in the game between Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

India, who have had to endure heartbreaking defeats at the hands of Australia in major ICC events, would like to see a premature exit of their strong rivals.

On fine-tuning their game ahead of the knockouts, India don't need to do much having ticked all boxes in their back-

England seal semifinal spot

Bridgetown: Pacer Chris Jordan (4/10) grabbed a sensational hat-trick in his birthplace before captain Jos Buttler's blitzkrieg as England stormed into the semifinals of the T20 World Cup with a 10-wicket mauling of USA here Sunday. The Americans folded for 115 in 18.5 overs. Buttler (83 n o, 38b, 6x4, 7x6) and Phil Salt (25 n o) then completed the chase in just 9.4 overs as England reached 117 for no loss. Buttler hit five maximums off a Harmeet Singh over to leave the USA attack bruised and battered. Adil Rashid (2/13) and Sam Curran (2/23) also bowled well for England.

to-back wins against Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Both Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli played innings of substance against Afghanistan, while Shivam Dube, who had not been able to perform his role, answered his critics with a crucial knock.

The biggest positive for India

in this tournament has been the all-round effort of Hardik Pandya, who has now come to the party with the bat to complement his incisive spells.

Rohit was the first to say Saturday that Pandya's batting always puts 'India in a good stead'. "I mentioned in the last game as well, his batting well puts us in a good stead. We want to finish well and Hardik being Hardik we know what he is capable of," Rohit said after the game Saturday. "He is a very important player for us, if he can keep doing that, it will put us in good positions," added the skipper.

Other than India, there is another thing to worry about for Australia - the weather. As per the local met office here, there is a possibility of showers during the day. If that happens and the match is washed out, then both sides will get one point each. It will not harm India, but if the Afghans win against Bangladesh, then it will mean the exit door for the Aussies.

SHORT TAKES

Recurve archers win two bronze medals

Antalya (Turkey): Dhiraj Bommadevara secured two bronze - one individual and another in the recurve mixed team event with Bhajan Kaur, as India ended their campaign with four medals in the Archery World Cup Stage 3, here Sunday. India could have added another medal but Anikita Bhakat narrowly lost her semifinal to eventual gold medalist and top-seed Yang Xiaolei of China. She eventually ended up losing her bronze medal match as well. The third-seeded mixed team of Dhiraj and Bhajan produced an excellent performance to rally past Mexico and clinch a bronze. Trailing 0-2 after conceding the opening set, Dhiraj and Bhajan produced a flawless round to bring it level and seal a stunning 5-3 (35-38, 40-39, 38-37, 38-38) win over their Mexican opponents Alejandra Valencia and Matias Grande in the bronze playoff.

Murray doubtful for Wimbledon

London: Andy Murray will have an operation on his back Saturday - nine days before the start of Wimbledon - after being forced to pull out of Queen's Club tennis tournament earlier this week. The 37-year-old Scot, was aiming to make a farewell appearance at the All England Club, where he is a two-time champion. However, the surgery virtually rules him out of the event, even though organisers have not made an official announcement yet. "I have no clarity where I stand now, but the surgery will certainly make it very difficult for me to play at Wimbledon this year," Murray was quoted as saying by a section of the British media, Sunday

Bindra optimistic

New Delhi: India's 2008 Beijing Olympics gold medalist Abhinav Bindra said Sunday that the Indian shooting contingent have the 'potential to secure multiple medals' at the Paris Olympics, scheduled to start July 26. Bindra further added that the depth of talent in Indian shooting is immense. Asked if he has any plans to take over the coaching role in the near future, Bindra emphatically said "no". "Predicting the exact number of medals is challenging, but I am optimistic about our chances in Paris. Our shooters have been training rigorously and can win many medals," Bindra said. He added that in future he wouldn't coach the Indian shooters.

2nd NADA suspension order for wrestler Bajrang

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) suspended Sunday wrestler Bajrang Punia for a second time, three weeks after its anti-disciplinary doping (ADDP) panel had revoked his suspension on the grounds that NADA had not issued a 'notice of charge' to him.

NADA had suspended April 23 the Tokyo Games bronze medalist for refusal to give his urine sample for dope test during the selection trials held March 10 in Sonapat. The sport's global governing body United Wrestling World (UWW) had also suspended him.

Bajrang had appealed against the provisional suspension and the ADDP had revoked it May 31 till NADA issues the notice of charge. Swinging into action, NADA served Sunday the notice to the wrestler.

"This serves as a formal notice that you are being charged with the violation of Article 2.3 of the National Anti-Doping Rules, 2021 and now you are provisionally suspended," said

- 1st suspension order issued April 23
- 1st suspension order revoked May 31, as Bajrang had not been served notice
- Bajrang had allegedly refused to give his urine sample March 10

NADA's communication to the wrestler:

Bajrang has time till July 11 to request for a hearing or accept the charge. His lawyer Vidhushpat Singhania told this agency they will challenge the suspension. "Yes, we will have to file a reply," Singhania said.

NADA also explained the reason for its action. "Chaperone/DCO had duly approached you and informed you that you were required to provide a urine sample for dope analysis purposes," NADA told Bajrang in its communication.

"Even after several requests, you had refused to provide your urine sample on the ground that you would not provide the sample unless NADA replies to your email," it added.

Aggressive approach helping Kuldeep

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gros Islet, June 23: Kuldeep Yadav believes in fighting fire with fire in the T20 format and it is that aggressive approach that is helping the Indian wrist spinner get instant success in the Caribbean leg of T20 World Cup.

Kuldeep, India's best spinner across formats over the past 12 months was benched in the league stage of the tournament in USA due to the surfaces in New York. The wily operator was expected to play a major role on the spin-friendly tracks in the Caribbean and he is doing exactly that in the Super 8. Kuldeep has already taken five wickets in the two games he has been part of, including a three-wicket haul Saturday against Bangladesh.

Explaining his mindset, Kuldeep said he doesn't compromise on his length. "For any spinner around the globe, the length matters a lot. And especially in this format, you have to read what the batter is trying to do, be more aggressive, the approach should be like very, very aggressive. So that actu-



Kuldeep Yadav celebrates with teammates after dismissing a Bangladeshi batter Saturday PTI PHOTO

ally helped me during IPL and it's actually helping me in T20 World Cup," Kuldeep stated.

However, Kuldeep will face his toughest test against Australia here Monday. He was asked how he sticks to his game plan even when the batters are looking for boundaries. "When

the other team need like 10 runs or 12 runs per over and the batter is going against you, my plan is to just stick with the length," Kuldeep said.

"When they try to attack you, if you have a proper plan against them and you are bowling in probably the better length and

When a batter is trying to attack me, I don't think of getting him out, I just concentrate on length as that is my strength

KULDEEP YADAV

you have maximum chances of getting the batter out. So that is my thinking, not thinking I have to get him out, just the length," the Chinaman bowler added.

Kuldeep hinted that he was fully aware of the team's combination in the Caribbean, having missed out in New York due to pace friendly conditions.

"Obviously, I wasn't playing. Actually, I was playing as a 12th man there. I was helping out the teammates and carrying the drinks. That is more like playing. I didn't bowl there but I would have loved to bowl there," Kuldeep stated.

"Now in Super 8 stage, we have a lot of pressure as well. We're going to play Australia in a couple of days' time. The wickets are good for spinners and I am enjoying," Kuldeep signed off.

Indian eves power past SA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, June 23: Smriti Mandhana (90, 83b, 11x4) waltzed to a characteristically elegant innings to form the crux of India's six-wicket win in the third and final women's ODI against South Africa, marking their 3-0 series clean sweep here Sunday.

Mandhana had efficient support casts in Shafali Verma (25), Priya Punia (28) and Harmanpreet Kaur (42, 48b, 2x4) as India went past the target of 216 without exerting themselves much. The hosts made 220 for four in 40.4 overs, after South Africa were restricted to an underwhelming 215 for eight despite skipper Laura Wolvaardt's solid 61 (57b, 7x4).

Though she failed to make a third hundred on the trot, the knock underlined the way Mandhana dominated this ODI series, scoring 343 runs at an average of 114.33. The 27-year-old was once again composed in the middle, and played some typically graceful shots.

The pitch was smoothed out



IN FULL FLOW: Smriti Mandhana plays a shot on the leg-side during her match-winning knock Sunday PTI PHOTO

during the chase and the SA bowling was anything but threatening, giving the Indian vice-captain ample time to pursue her game without an iota of pressure.

On view were those trademark shots that make her batting a sight for the sore eyes - swivel pulls, cover drives, straight drives and those late taps that touch the rope after teasing the third man fielder. However,

Mandhana's batting partners too deserved a pat on their backs for producing little yet polished knocks. She put on 61 runs with Shafali for the first wicket, 62 for the second with Priya and 54 for the third with Kaur.

Brief scores: South Africa 215 for 8 (Laura Wolvaardt 61, Deepti Sharma 2/27) lost to India 220 for 4 in 40.4 overs (Smriti Mandhana 90) by six wickets.

Paddler Akula creates history

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lagos, June 23: Sreeja Akula created history Sunday by becoming the first ever Indian paddler to win a WTT Contender Singles title as she beat Chinese player Ding Yijie 4-1 in the final. Akula, who is currently ranked 47th in the world lost the first game against the rising Chinese youngster 10-12, but came back strongly to win the next four games 11-9, 11-6, 11-8 and 11-6 to win the crown.

Not only did she become the first ever Indian paddler to win a WTT Contender singles title, she also became the first ever Indian paddler to reach the finals of the Contenders tournament with a win over compatriot Sutirtha Mukherjee in a closely fought encounter (3-2) Saturday.

Akula and Archana Kamath capped off their impressive run with a dominant 3-0 (11-9, 11-6, 12-10) victory over compatriots Diya Chitale and Yashaswini Ghorpade to win the women's doubles title.

Belgium back in contention



AGENCIES

Cologne, June 23: Youri Tielemans breathed new life into Belgium's Euro 2024 campaign as the Aston Villa midfielder's goal after just 73 seconds inspired a vital 2-0 win Saturday against Romania. Domenico Tedesco's side would have been on the brink of elimination if they had suffered a second successive Group E defeat. But Tielemans' second-minute strike eased fears of yet another major tournament flop from star-studded Belgium. Kevin De Bruyne wrapped up the points in the closing stages to leave all four teams in the group level on three points.

The stage is now set for a dramatic final round of fixtures in the battle to reach the last 16. Belgium face Ukraine and

Romania play Slovakia June 26. With 45 runs separating the two nations in FIFA's rankings, third-placed Belgium's 0-1 loss Monday to Slovakia was the biggest upset in European Championship history. Romania, ranked 47th, competed gamely as they chased their own shock, but this time Belgium's superior class proved decisive.

"I have the same feeling as against Slovakia: we played well but the difference is that we scored and won today," said Belgium captain De Bruyne. "We made a few mistakes and gave away a few chances, but we can be satisfied with our performance, both offensively and defensively."

Having bowed out at the group stage of the 2022 World Cup and lost in the quarterfinals of the last two Euros, Belgium's golden generation have given themselves fresh hope of finally delivering on their vast potential.

Despite this loss, Edward Iordanescu's Romania are still in contention to make the Euro knockout stage for the first time in 24 years.