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Victory sealed, focus shifts to 1st BJP CM in Odisha

With a stupendous victory sealed and the BJP all set to form its maiden full-majority

will take a call on the chief minister of Odisha, sources said.

Contrary to the recent

cabinet Dharmendra Pradhan even though he has been elected to the Lok Sabha from Sambalpur. Pradhan has

last 10 years, Pradhan has always been assigned with important portfolios demonstrating the prime minister's confidence in his ability to deliver. He has efficiently managed portfolios like Petroleum and Natural Gas, Steel, Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

He earned the epithet "Ujjwala Man" for successfully delivering free cooking gas to women from below poverty line (BPL) families in Modi 1.0, which paid handsome dividends to the the saffron party in the 2019 elections.

Pradhan's proximity to the prime minister and Union Home Minister Amit Shah was evident from the fact that he was taken to Rajya Sabha from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh and made minister. He is among few leaders of the party whose talent to manage crisis is well-known. He has also served long enough in organisation by being poll-in-charge of several states and delivering victory.

If the party follows the thumb rule for electing the leader of legislature party, Pradhan could muster a majority as his writ still runs in the party affairs of the state.



government in Odisha, the focus has now shifted to the chief minister's chair.

Who will become the first BJP 'Mukhyamantri' of the state is now playing top in the minds of people.

While speculations over the key contenders for the seat have heightened, all eyes are on the BJP's parliamentary board meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a day or two. The meeting among other issues

practice of the party of delaying its chief ministerial face in various states, the leadership is expected to make the decision soon for Odisha. The prime reason is the prime minister's commitment to the people of the state during election campaigning that a BJP chief minister will take oath of office on June 10.

There are several names making the rounds. Among the frontrunners is Union minister in the outgoing Modi

virtually been the face of BJP in Odisha for the last 10 years and fits the bill.

He has all the requisite qualifications to hold the office of chief minister. A key member of the Modi cabinet in the



Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see a shadow.

FOOD

Turn over a new leaf

The young leaves of pilkhan tree are a worthy alternative to leafy vegetables in the spring season. Pilkhan, or white fig, is a native inhabitant of Delhi, flourishing effortlessly in the city's dry and arid climate. The gigantic tree with massive canopies can be spotted across the city parks and along the roads. Although most people cross pilkhan trees every day, they are oblivious to the food that this tree can provide.

Pilkhan (*Ficus virens*) is a deciduous tree that sheds all its leaves around February and sprouts new ones around April. The tree is known as pakhad in Hindi, bassari in Marathi, kurugatti in Tamil, cherala in Malayalam and pepri in Gujarati. The unopened leaf buds and young leaves of the tree are slightly sour and can be consumed as a healthy stir-fried sabji (see recipe) or turned into a pickle. Though many tribal communities in the country eat pilkhan, not much has been documented about it.

The tree is found in tropical countries and is used widely for food in the Southeast Asian region. In Myanmar, the leaves are used to prepare soups with peas and beans, or potato. The young shoots and leaves are known as phak lueat in Thailand and are boiled and used in curries. These leaves are available for only a short time, which means that they can be consumed just once or twice a year. However, they can be dried and preserved for later use.

These leaves are rich in phenols and flavonoids. A study published in the journal *Biocatalysis and Agricultural Biotechnology* in September 2022 shows that extracts of pilkhan leaves have ferric-reducing power and could prevent oxidative DNA damage. Another study, published in the journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology* in December 2017, indicates that proanthocyanidins present in the stem, leaves and fruits could re-duce growth of

breast cancer cells in animal models. Researchers also reported in the *Journal of Pharmacognosy and Phytochemistry* in May 2016 that flavonoids isolated from the leaves can inhibit viruses such as Cocksackie B4 and hepatitis A virus to different extents. The



leaves are also said to be good against diabetes, according to a review published in *The Pharma Innovation journal* in May 2023.

More than the leaves, the use of the bark as medicine has been documented. Research published in the *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences Review and Research* in July 2014 shows that the bark extract can significantly quicken the wound-healing process by helping in wound contraction and a decrease in the period for epithelialisation, compared to the healing in a control group of animals. An infusion of the bark is often used as a mouthwash in spongy gum conditions. In Ayurveda, the bark is used in the *Nālpāmaram* group of formulations, which includes *Nalpamaradi tailam* used to improve the skin and *Saribadyasavam* that treats skin diseases like eczema.

The round, pea-sized flowers of pilkhan also have medicinal value. These inflorescences have a fleshy receptacle and are used to prepare a jam that helps with indigestion and heart-related diseases. They are also used to prepare a soup to provide relief from urinary disease and can reduce excess sweating. The white latex of the tree, when applied on sores, reduces

inflammation, researchers write in the book *Medico-Biowealth of India*, published in August 2023.

Though the tree is generally found in arid conditions, it can also survive in stagnant water. The tree appears to be taller in wetter areas. Pilkhan is said to be a good choice for landscaping, as it does well in both sun and shade.

Ficus is the largest genus belonging to the *Moraceae* or the fig family. The pilkhan belongs to a group known as "strangler figs", because its seeds can germinate on other trees and grow to strangle and kill the host tree. The tree's sturdiness is one reason for it being used to grow bonsai. Unlike the aerial roots of banyan, which form props and help the tree spread vegetatively, the aerial roots of pilkhan tend to wrap themselves around the main stem—this gives the bonsai a unique look.

RECIPE - STIR-FRIED SABJI

Ingredients

- Pilkhan buds: 1 cup
- Gram flour: 1 tablespoon
- Asafoetida: 1 pinch
- Cumin: 1/2 teaspoon
- Chilli powder: 1 teaspoon
- Coriander powder: 1 teaspoon
- Turmeric: 1/2 teaspoon
- Garam masala: 1/2 teaspoon
- Salt to taste
- Oil for frying

Method

Remove the hard parts of the pilkhan buds. Take some water in a pan, mix in a teaspoon of salt and put it on the gas to boil. Add the buds and cook until they are soft. Drain out the water. Take some oil in a wok and put it on the flame. Add asafoetida and cumin seeds and fry them till they sputter. Add the boiled buds along with chilli powder, coriander powder, turmeric and salt. Mix well. Add the gram flour and mix again and then fry till fully cooked. Enjoy with parathas or rotis.

Zomato asks Customers to "Avoid Ordering during peak Afternoon" Internet Reacts

People in several parts of India are grappling with the effects of extreme heatwave conditions. In this context, popular food delivery Zomato has urged customers to "avoid ordering during peak afternoon unless absolutely necessary".

The brand took to X (formerly Twitter) to make this request. It has received a lot of attention online and sparked a wide range of reactions from users. The post has more than 878K views so far. X users had a lot to say about this public request.

Viral: Zomato User Faces Criticism For Sharing Delivery Agent's Request For Late-Night Tip

Reacting to the viral post, several people offered alternate solutions to the issue. Some criticised Zomato for asking it in the first place, while others felt that it wasn't enough to tackle the real problems that may be faced by the food delivery agents. Check out selected reactions below.



Some users felt that Zomato must not offer food delivery in the afternoon:

"Why don't you instead suspend your services during peak afternoon?"

"Bro, you are in food services and people order food when it is absolutely necessary. If you actually care about your employees, you would be posting "Our services are unavailable during peak afternoon hours".

"Close down the services between 12 to 4. It's okay to be human sometimes before profits. Yeah, we won't order, but still closure from you will do more good."

Some felt differently, claiming that doing so would defeat the purpose of offering such a service in the first place:

"Is it even real? Though I appreciate the concern, lunchtime orders cannot be postponed to dinner time. If so, Zomato needs to identify "absolutely necessary" orders and not-so-necessary orders."

"Wow, a food delivery app asking its customers not to order in the afternoon, what about those who stay alone? If you're really that concerned about the well-being of the delivery guys, increase their incentives, you guys already charge a Platform fee on every order to pay Goyal's bills."

From Page 18 (Most Interesting Facts...)

Charles Dickens used fake books as decoration for his library!

Charles Dickens, an English writer and social critic, owned a bookcase that works as a secret door in his house and it was filled with fake books bearing amusing names including *The Art of Cutting Teeth*, *The Lives of a Cat* which came in nine volumes, and *Jonah's Account of the Whale*. He also used fake books as decoration for his library.

The first book to sell over 1 million copies

Scarry's "Millard Fillmore" states that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was the first American novel to sell 1 million copies.

If you publish a book in Norway, the government will buy 1000 copies!

If you publish a book in Norway and it passes quality control, the government will buy 1000 copies. Furthermore, the government will buy 1,500 if it's a children's book and distribute them to libraries throughout the country.

World's Largest Bookstore

The Powell's Bookstore in Oregon, Portland is the world's largest bookstore. Above all, the mega bookstore has about 1.6 acres, (68,000 square feet) of retail floor space.

People who read fiction books tend to be nicer

According to a study by Kingston University in 2017, people who read fiction books tend to be nicer. Consequently, there is a relationship between reading fiction and real-world social abilities. Furthermore, people who read fiction are more open-minded and empathetic to others' viewpoints. As a result, they would more likely to demonstrate positive social behavior.

The first printed books did not have the name of the Author

The first printed books in the early times did not have the name of the author or even the title of the book on their covers. The covers were filled with artworks, covered in drawings, leather or even gold.

Readers tend to live longer over non-readers

According to a study published in *Social Science and Medicine*, readers tend to live longer. Moreover, reading books for at least 30 minutes to 1 hour a day can increase a person's lifespan. Above all, researchers found that those who read books for half an hour or more per day had a "health advantage" over the non-readers. As a result, readers live almost two years longer on average.

From Page 04 (RBI projects real GDP...)

Net foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, however, moderated to US\$ 10.6 billion from US\$ 28.0 billion primarily owing to higher repatriation. Other major capital flows - external commercial borrowings (ECBs) and non-resident deposits - were higher during the year. With overall net capital inflows outpacing the CAD, there was an accretion to the foreign exchange reserves to the tune of US\$ 32.9 billion (on a balance of payments basis, i.e., excluding valuation effects) during April-December 2023. India's foreign exchange reserves rose to an all-time high of US\$ 648.7 billion as on May 17, 2024, covering 11.4 months of imports

and strengthening buffers against external sector risks and adverse spillovers.

To sum up, the Indian economy is navigating the drag from an adverse global macroeconomic and financial environment. Real GDP growth is robust on the back of solid investment demand which is supported by healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, the government's focus on capital expenditure and prudent monetary, regulatory and fiscal policies. As headline inflation eases towards the target, it will spur consumption demand especially in rural areas. The external sector's strength and buffers in the form of foreign exchange reserves will insulate domestic economic activity from global spillovers. Geopolitical tensions, geoeconomic fragmentation, global financial market volatility, international commodity price movements and erratic weather developments pose downside risks to the growth outlook and upside risks to the inflation outlook. The Indian economy would also have to navigate the medium-term challenges posed by rapid adoption of AI/ML technologies and recurrent climate shocks. Even so, it is well placed to step-up its growth trajectory over the next decade in an environment of macroeconomic and financial stability so as to achieve its developmental aspirations by reaping its demographic dividend and exploiting its competitive advantages that have placed it as the fastest growing major economy of the world.

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

RBI projects real GDP growth at 7% in FY25

Pradeep Kumar Panda, Economist, Bhubaneswar

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its annual report, projected Indian economy to grow at 7 per cent in the current financial year. "Real GDP growth for 2024-25 is projected at 7 per cent with risks evenly balanced," RBI said in its annual report released on May 30. Further, the report said Indian economy expanded at a robust pace in 2023-24, with real GDP growth accelerating to 7.6 per cent from 7 per cent in the previous year – the third successive year of 7 per cent or above growth.

The global economy is exhibiting resilience and fortitude. There are, however, multiple challenges emanating from still elevated inflation, tight monetary and financial conditions, escalating geopolitical tensions, rising geoeconomic fragmentation, disruptions in key global shipping routes, high public debt burdens and financial stability risks. Amidst heightened uncertainty, global growth is likely to weaken below its historical average in 2024, with divergent and uneven pathways across geographies and sectors. Global financial markets are on edge, with recurrent bouts of volatility as every incoming data increases uncertainty around monetary policy trajectories of major central banks.

Inflation is easing but rules above target in major systemic economies. The outlook for further disinflation is impeded by sticky core and services inflation and tight labour markets. While major advanced economy (AE) central banks are expected to pivot towards rate cuts in 2024, the fuzzy inflation trajectory is leading to sharp gyrations in market expectations of the pace and timing of monetary policy easing. In this milieu, several emerging market economies (EMEs)¹ have started rate cutting cycle and major AEs are undertaking regime shifts including exits from negative policy rates.

Amidst this challenging global economic environment, the Indian economy is exhibiting strength and stability with robust macroeconomic fundamentals and financial stability. India has emerged as the fastest growing major economy in the world and a leading contributor to global growth. Inflationary pressures are abating, led by steady core

disinflation and deflation in fuel prices. Food inflation, however, remains vulnerable to recurring supply shocks which are preventing a quicker alignment of headline inflation with the target. Fiscal consolidation is progressing along with an improvement in the quality of fiscal spending and adjustment. The external sector is gaining strength, with the narrowing of the current account deficit (CAD) and foreign exchange reserves rising to an all-time high. The financial sector is sound and vibrant, supporting double digit credit growth, backed by high capital adequacy, solid earnings and improvements in asset quality. The outlook for the Indian economy in 2024-25 is brightening.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)², global growth decelerated to 3.2 per cent during 2023 from 3.5 per cent during 2022. The pace of economic activity was dragged down, inter alia, by restrictive monetary policy stances to tame inflation, protracted geopolitical tensions and sluggish recovery in China. The potential impact of climate change became increasingly evident, with economic losses due to extreme weather events. Global inflation fell to 6.8 per cent in 2023 from 8.7 per cent in 2022 on the back of easing commodity prices, favourable supply conditions and monetary tightening across major economies, but still remained at its highest level in over two decades. Inflation in respect of core items and services remained elevated, exhibiting persistence in major economies amidst tight labour market conditions.

Global merchandise trade volume contracted by 1.2 per cent in 2023 in contrast to an increase of 3.0 per cent in the preceding year as demand rotated back from goods towards services with the ebbing of the pandemic. Apart from geopolitical tensions and geoeconomic fragmentation, the multi-decadal high inflation in 2023 depressed consumption of manufactured goods, which also dampened external trade. On the other hand, services trade exhibited resilience due to continued recovery in spending on travel from the COVID-19 pandemic lows and sustained

demand for digitally delivered services.

Global financial conditions tightened amidst heightened volatility in response to synchronised monetary policy tightening as well as aggravating geopolitical conflicts. Sovereign



bond yields hardened to multi-year highs in the first half of 2023-24, driven up by monetary tightening and exhibited large two-way fluctuations in the subsequent period over growing haziness surrounding monetary policy trajectories of major central banks. The US dollar remained strong, with large swings in response to changing monetary policy expectations. This exerted downward pressures on a number of EME currencies. Global equity markets inched up higher on prospects of soft landing, with sharp gains registered in technology and artificial intelligence (AI) related stocks.

Against the backdrop of subdued global economic activity and multiple headwinds, the Indian economy expanded at a robust pace in 2023-24, with real GDP growth accelerating to 7.6 per cent from 7.0 per cent in the previous year – the third successive year of 7 per cent or above growth⁴. With gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) accelerating to 10.2 per cent in 2023-24 from 6.6 per cent in 2022-23, investment was the major driver of domestic demand, buoyed by government spending on infrastructure. Growth in private consumption demand, on the other hand, stood at 3.0 per cent as against 6.8 per cent a year ago. Government consumption demand was also subdued tracking fiscal consolidation. Net exports dragged down growth due to the moderation in exports as a result of contraction in global trade volumes. Import demand was relatively buoyant on robust domestic demand.

On the supply side, growth in gross value added (GVA) in the agriculture and allied sector in 2023-24 stood at 0.7 per cent as against 4.7 per cent a year earlier as foodgrains production declined due to the deficient and uneven southwest monsoon rainfall. The government undertook a number of supply measures throughout the year to

maintain domestic supply-demand balance in food items and mitigate inflationary pressures. They included release of public foodgrains stocks through open market sales; application of stock limits in cereals and pulses; export

restrictions on cereals and onions; and easing of access to import pulses and edible oils. The declaration of 2023 as the international year of millets by the United Nations (UN) provided a renewed thrust to diversification of crops from rice and wheat towards nutritional, environmentally sustainable and traditional crops across the country.

In the industrial sector, manufacturing GVA accelerated, benefitting from the boost to corporate profitability provided by easing of input costs. Industrial activity was also supported by the sustained momentum in mining and electricity generation. Infrastructure and capital goods production gained from the government's push to capital expenditure. The production of consumer goods recovered, led by the consumer non-durables segment. The recovery in consumer goods was volume driven, with growth in rural demand catching up with the urban segment. The government continued with initiatives to promote the industrial sector, especially in emerging areas. Investment amounting to ₹1.3 trillion was approved for the establishment of three semiconductor manufacturing units as part of the development of the full production line for semiconductors. In order to support the renewable energy initiative, royalty rates for the extraction of three vital and strategic minerals [viz., lithium, niobium, and rare earth elements (REEs)] were specified to attract bidders in the auction process. The government also endorsed a viability gap funding (VGF) scheme to develop battery energy storage systems (BESS) by lowering storage costs for both distribution companies and consumers. The 'Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana'⁵ marks a significant push towards sustainable energy solutions.

The services sector, with a share of over 63 per cent in GVA,

remained the mainstay of aggregate supply, with growth of 7.9 per cent in 2023-24. Construction activity accelerated to register double digit growth, benefitting from rising demand in the housing sector and the government's thrust on infrastructure. The sustained ebullience in bank credit growth propelled financial services, while there was a slowdown in IT services during 2023-24 on subdued global demand.

Employment conditions improved, with the unemployment rate falling to its lowest level during 2023 (January-December) - 3.1 per cent in the usual status and 5.0 per cent in the current weekly status - in the periodic labour force survey (PLFS) series for which data are available from 2017-18 (July-June). Both urban and rural regions recorded a decline in the unemployment rate. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) and worker population ratio (usual status) increased to 59.8 per cent and 58.0 per cent, respectively, in 2023, the highest since the survey's inception, along with a steep rise in the female LFPR.

According to the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) Report 2024, India's climate action performance improved, making India the fourth best performing nation among 63 countries analysed. Strong progress was made towards nationally determined contributions in terms of key indicators like reduction in the emission intensity of GDP and an increase in the installed capacity of non-fossil fuel-based energy resources. Among major climate initiatives, India notified the carbon credit trading scheme (CCTS) while also launching the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Inflationary pressures moderated albeit unevenly during 2023-24, reflecting the combined impact of calibrated monetary tightening, easing of input cost pressures and supply management measures. Headline inflation softened to 5.4 per cent during 2023-24 from 6.7 per cent in the previous year, driven by the fall in core inflation (CPI excluding food and fuel) to 4.3 per cent from 6.1 per cent. Fuel inflation also eased sharply, moving into deflation since September 2023, with the reduction in the domestic prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and kerosene on the back of correction in global energy prices. Food inflation, on the other hand, hardened amidst high volatility. Sustained pressures from prices of cereals, pulses, spices and vegetables due to overlapping supply shocks pushed up food inflation to 7.0 per cent in 2023-24 from 6.7 per cent a year ago, thereby keeping headline inflation above the target.

Continued Page 4

ECONOMY

NEW THREADS

Traditional Ikat weavers of Odisha mobilise into a company to improve incomes and lives

Born to a weaver's family, Bhagawati Mahananda of Odisha can bring just about any design to life using yarn, a few shuttles and a hand loom. But her

After his father's demise, Radhakanta sought Bhagawati's help in weaving. Noticing her dexterity, he encouraged her to join the Dungerepalli Bunakara

National Rural Development Council (NRDC), a non-profit headquartered in the district, which was roped in to help the company. To do this, several changes were brought in to the weavers' work. First, the weavers joining the company were given large warps of yarn with better count, to cut input costs and improve fabric quality. Then, with help from Mumbai-based social entrepreneurship organisation Tisser Artisans Trust and the Indian Institute of Handloom Technology, the weavers learnt new ways of dyeing, colour technology, and bringing in new motifs to the Ikat design. They also began making dress materials and stoles along with traditional saris and dhotis.

The weavers also connected with entrepreneurs, designers and retail sellers in cities such as Bhubaneswar, Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Delhi and Mumbai to sell their products, and promoted them at artisan fairs and exhibitions. "As a result of these efforts, the weavers have seen remuneration increase by Rs 4,000-6,000 per month. From 250 weavers in the first year, there are now 675 weaver-shareholders across villages in the district," says Mahapatra. "Women are now a part of the business. There are fewer school dropouts and people are gaining socio-economic awareness. Fewer people are migrating in search of work," he says.

Now, with NABARD stepping back, the weavers plan to take over the operations and to grow the company.



skills had gone unnoticed by her family for years. It is her husband, Radhakanta, and father-in-law who used to do all of the weaving at their house in Gambharipali village in Subarnapur district. The district, which is also known as Sonapur, is home to several weaver communities known for the unique Bomkai design, more popularly called Ikat. But over the years, without direct access to the market, remuneration for weavers stagnated and younger generations left home to seek work elsewhere. Those who continued weaving, like Radhakanta, sold the woven fabric to sahlukars (local dealers) and earned just Rs 500-700 a month.

Producer Company Limited, Sonapur. "We both now work on the company's orders and earn Rs 15,000-18,000 a month due to improved operations and steady work," he says.

Dungerepalli Bunakara is a weavers' producer company that organises weavers in the region and provides them with a steady income. In 2019, Dungerepalli Bunakara received financial support from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Bhubaneswar. "The goal behind the company is to provide guaranteed work to the weavers and to bring in innovation in the craft," says Pradip Kumar Mahapatra, member-secretary of

UPI sets new record in May with 14 billion transactions worth over Rs 20 trillion

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has set another record as it processed more than 14 billion transactions worth Rs 20.45 lakh crore or Rs 20.45 trillion in May, according to data issued by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

UPI saw a 5% jump in volume and a 4% surge in value of transactions in May compared to April. This is a new high in terms of volume and value for UPI which began its operations in April 2016.

Last month, the volume of transactions declined by 1% to 13.3 billion



from 13.44 billion in March. The total transaction value in the same period also fell 0.7% to Rs 19.64 trillion from Rs 19.78 trillion.

The transaction count is expected to rise in the coming months as NPCI is expanding UPI services to more countries. Besides India, it is also available in countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, UAE, France, Nepal, UK, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka. Going forward, the Reserve Bank of India along with NPCI have plans to take UPI to 20 countries by FY29.

In its annual report, RBI also said that nearly four out of five digital payments in the country were conducted on the UPI in FY24.

As of April, PhonePe had 48.87% market share in the UPI ecosystem. This was followed by Google Pay and Paytm which controlled 37.5% and 8.3% market share in UPI respectively. Value wise, PhonePe had close to 51% market share followed by Google Pay and Paytm with 35% and 5% share respectively.

The break up data for May is yet to be released by NPCI.

NPCI is reportedly considering reviewing its decision to implement a 30% cap on the market share of UPI apps by the end of 2024.

Meanwhile, industry stalwarts Adani Group and Mukesh Ambani-backed Reliance Group are also gearing up to enter the UPI and digital bank ecosystem. As per media reports, Adani Group is considering seeking for a license to operate on the UPI while Jio Financial announced a new app called JioFinance.

From Page 03 (RBI projects real GDP...)

Considering the growth-inflation dynamics, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent during 2023-24 and continued with a stance of withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation progressively aligns with the target, while supporting growth. The MPC noted that monetary policy has to remain disinflationary to ensure fuller transmission and better anchoring of inflation expectations. Liquidity conditions tightened during 2023-24 in sync with the monetary policy stance. The liquidity surplus as reflected in average daily net absorption under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) moderated to ₹485 crore during 2023-24 from ₹1.87 lakh crore in the previous year. The Reserve Bank conducted two-way operations, both main and fine-tuning auctions, to ensure availability of adequate liquidity in the banking system. The weighted average call rate (WACR) traded, on an average, 13 basis points (bps) above the policy repo rate during 2023-24.

Domestic financial markets remained stable during 2023-24, with orderly movements in the bond and foreign exchange markets and exuberant equity markets. G-sec yields softened on favourable inflation prints, reports of inclusion of Indian bonds in major global bond indices and lower than expected market borrowings by the Union Government in the interim Union Budget 2024-25. Corporate bond yields moderated tracking the G-sec yields, and corporate bond issuances increased. The Indian Rupee (INR) displayed stability on the back of improving external sector and macroeconomic fundamentals, including a significant moderation in the CAD and resurgent capital inflows, that offset persistent headwinds from volatile global financial markets, the strong US dollar and persisting geopolitical tensions. The INR depreciated by 1.4 per cent during 2023-24 (7.8 per cent in the previous year) and was amongst the best performing major EME currencies during the year. Equity prices recorded solid gains on robust corporate earnings and strong domestic GDP growth. There were, however, intermittent corrections due to geopolitical concerns and uncertain

monetary policy trajectories in the systemic economies. The domestic equity market capitalisation crossed the US\$ 4 trillion mark in H2:2023-24, making the Indian stock market the fifth largest in the world.

The transmission of the repo rate increases undertaken in 2022-23 to banks' lending and deposit rates continued in 2023-24 amidst moderation in surplus liquidity in the banking system and credit growth persistently outpacing deposit growth. The share of external benchmark linked loans in total outstanding floating loans rose further, with a concomitant fall in the marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) linked loans. The expansion of currency in circulation moderated while deposit growth accelerated with the return of ₹2000 banknotes (following their withdrawal from circulation in May 2023) to the banking system, mostly in the form of deposits.

The central government delivered on its fiscal consolidation commitments. The gross fiscal deficit (GFD) declined to 5.9 per cent of GDP in 2023-24 (RE) from 6.4 per cent of GDP in 2022-23. Revenue spending growth was contained at 2.5 per cent while capital expenditure grew in double digits for the fourth consecutive year. Fiscal adjustment was also supported by buoyant revenues - gross tax revenues increased to 11.7 per cent of GDP in 2023-24 (RE), their highest level since 2008-09, driven by income tax collections. States budgeted a GFD of 3.1 per cent of GDP in 2023-24, within the limit of 3.5 per cent prescribed by the Centre. Capital expenditure by states rose by 19.4 per cent during 2023-24. The general government deficit moved lower in 2023-24 (BE), even as general government capital outlay increased from 5.0 per cent of GDP in 2022-23 (RE) to 5.6 per cent of GDP in 2023-24 (BE).

During H2:2023-24, the Reserve Bank issued an ultra-long security of 50-year tenor aggregating ₹30,000 crore to cater to the growing needs of long-term institutional players. The central government's borrowing in H2 also included the issuance of new sovereign green bonds (SGrBs) of 30 years. The weighted average yield (WAY) on G-secs issued during the year moderated to 7.24 per cent in 2023-24 from 7.32 per cent in the previous year.

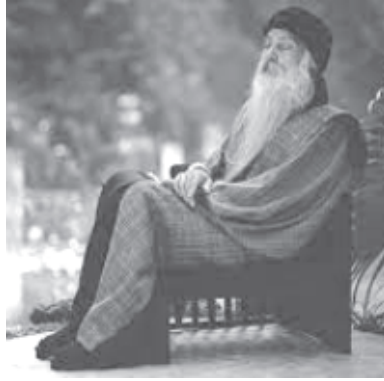
India's merchandise exports fell in 2023-24, driven by the declines in global trade volume and commodity prices. In 2023-24, merchandise exports contracted by 3.1 per cent in US dollar terms, while imports fell by 5.7 per cent. Consequently, India's merchandise trade deficit narrowed to US\$ 238.3 billion during 2023-24 from US\$ 264.9 billion a year ago. With robust services exports and a steady flow of inward remittances, the CAD moderated to 1.2 per cent of GDP during April-December 2023 from 2.6 per cent in the corresponding period a year ago. Capital flows were robust during 2023-24, attracted by buoyant economic growth and improving domestic macroeconomic fundamentals. Net foreign portfolio investment (FPI) flows recorded a significant turnaround to US\$ 41.6 billion in 2023-24, the second highest after 2014-15 (US\$ 45.1 billion). India received the highest net FPI inflows amongst EME peers during the year. Gross foreign direct investment (FDI) flows were resilient at US\$ 71.0 billion in 2023-24, broadly comparable to US\$ 71.4 billion a year ago.

Continued Page 2

SPIRITUALITY

Sufism: The Path of Love

By OSHO



Sufism is not concerned with knowledge. Its whole concern is love...intense, passionate love..how to fall in love with the whole, how to be in tune with the whole, how to bridge the distance between the creation and the creator...

Sufism is a vision. In fact to call it 'Sufism' is not right because it is not an 'ism' at all. Sufis don't call it 'Sufism'; it is the name given by the outsiders. They call their vision TASSAWURI, a love-vision, a loving approach towards reality. It is falling in love with existence. The person who thinks about existence is a little bit antagonistic because he creates a problem out of existence -- as if existence is challenging him and he has to decipher it, he has to decode the mystery, he has to destroy the mystery. He fights.

Sufis say: We and the existence are one. There is no need to fight. Persuade, coo, invite, love, befriend, and the existence itself starts revealing its mysteries. There is no need to rape it. The philosophic approach, the scientific approach, the intellectual approach, is a rape! It is forcing existence to reveal its heart. It is undressing existence by force and violence. The violence may be of scientific methods or of logical methods -- it doesn't matter -- but the violence is there. The philosopher has taken a standpoint as if nature is not ready to reveal its mysteries; it has to be forced. It is a violent approach.

Sufism says there is no need, the existence is waiting for you to come close so that it can reveal its heart. The existence is waiting for you to fall in love with it. If you are deeply in love with existence, it starts opening, it starts revealing its secrets. It has been waiting long for you to come close. There is no need to force it, there is no need to rape! You can fall in love. A world-view is an aggressive stance, a vision is a love stance.

Sufism is not a system, because all systems create bondage. They create prisons around you. Sufism is freedom. It does not create any system around you. It does not tell you to believe in a certain system. Yes, it talks about trust, but not of belief. Trust is a totally different thing. Belief is belief in a theory, in a philosophy, in a world-view: you believe in Islam, you believe in Hinduism, you believe in Christianity. But when you trust, you trust in life. You don't believe in life, you trust in life; you believe in philosophies. Belief is a poor substitute for trust. And remember, belief is again from the head, trust is from the heart. Their qualities are different, altogether different, diametrically opposite. Never

become part of a belief system: never become a Hindu or a Mohammedan or a Jaina or a Buddhist. When you become part of a belief system you are becoming a slave.

If you can find a place, a space, where belief is not imposed on you but trust is helped, find that place. That is the right place where you can really grow and grow into freedom. There is no other growth -- growth in freedom is the only growth. I said to you that Sufism is not a philosophy, but it is not anti-philosophy either. It simply takes no note of philosophies, anti-philosophies. It bypasses them, it is indifferent. It says: Why be bothered with words while reality is available? When you can drink the water, why be worried about the theories about water? When you can go in the sun and dance with the sunrays, why be bothered about theories? Why not have an experience, an authentic experience? Philosophy goes round and round; it is about and about. It never penetrates the core of truth. It thinks about truth, but to think about truth is to falsify. Truth has to be encountered, not thought about. Truth has to be lived not believed. Truth is not a conclusion: you don't arrive at truth by a syllogistic process. Truth is there! You are truth, the trees are truth, the birds are truth, the sun, the moon. The truth is all over the place, and you close your eyes and you think about truth? All thinking will take you astray. There is no need to think. Live it! Only by living do you come to know it. Sufism is not a way of thinking but a way of life, a way of living; not a philosophy of life but a way of life.

Sufism is not speculative. Speculation means that you think about things you have not known. Now this is foolish. Speculation means a blind man thinking about light, a deaf man thinking about music. When you think about God do you think you are in any way different from the blind man thinking about light? You have not seen God, you have not tasted anything divine, and you go on thinking. What will you do? Yes, mind is very clever and it can spin and weave beautiful systems, but those systems are just irrelevant. Good or bad, logical, illogical -- they are just irrelevant. They have no relevance to reality, they have no context in reality, they are mind games.

Sufism is not a mind game; that's why it is practical, absolutely practical. If you ask a Sufi about God, he will laugh, or he will sing a song which has no reference to God, or he will tell you a story in which God is never mentioned,

or he will say something which seems absolutely unrelated to the question. He is simply saying, "Don't be foolish. Let us be practical." You ask about God and he will talk about prayer, not about God. A true Sufi will avoid the subject of God. He will talk about prayer; prayer is practical. You ask about paradise and he will talk about your misery and how to drop it -- that is practicalness. Because paradise is not somewhere else, when you have dropped your miserable ways, you are in paradise, or to be more true, you are paradise.

Sufis always talk about techniques, methods. They never talk about 'whats', they only talk about 'hows'. In that way they are as scientific as any scientist. Sufism is a glimpse of how religion should be. It is pointless to talk about God; create the ladder that takes you to God. It is utterly a waste of time talking about paradise; give methods so that paradise can be explored inside your being. It is an inner phenomenon, it is your inner space. And so is hell.

Sufism is not even a religion. Rather, it is religiousness. It has no church, it has no book -- Bible or Koran or Veda or Dhammapada. It has no book, no sacred book. It has no church. Sufism is a very, very free-floating religiousness. Anybody can be a Sufi -- a Hindu, a Christian, a Mohammedan. Anywhere, one can be a Sufi. It is a practical approach on how to create religiousness.

People think "How to belong to a religion?" Sufism says: That is foolish, stupid. The only meaningful question can be: how to create religiousness, how to transform one's own energy so it becomes religious? If you start belonging to a religion you will have only a label but you will not be religious, and your other world will be nothing but a projection of this world.

You can go and see the other-worldly people, and if you watch them closely and observe them you will be surprised: their other-worldliness is nothing but a projection of this-worldliness. In-their heaven they are hoping for the same pleasures, of course on a more permanent basis --

more intense, more alive -- but the same pleasures. In their hell they are afraid of the same pains and the same sufferings, more intense and more permanent. The difference is of quantity. The hellfire will be the same fire that is here, but maybe more intense, more fiery. It burns more, hurts more, wounds more, but it will be the same fire. And in paradise? It will be the same food -- more delicious, more nourishing -- but the difference is of quantity; and the quantity is not the real difference. A difference arises only when you move from a quantitative vision to a qualitative vision. When you start changing the quality of your life, that's what religiousness is.

A true religious person cannot be Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian. He's simply religious. Jesus is not Christian, he's religious; I call him a Sufi. Buddha is not Buddhist, he is simply religious; I call him a Sufi. A Sufi is a person who has looked into the very essentials of religion and has discarded all that is non-essential. I invite you into this benediction called Sufism, but you will be able to enter only if you have great sympathy. Listen with love; argumentation won't help. Sufism makes no effort to convince you. It simply makes itself available for all those who are ready to partake of it. It is an invitation open to all and sundry, but only those who are courageous enough to be non-argumentative will be able to enter into this world of Sufism. Sympathy has to be the foundation, participation has to be the base. And remember,

argumentation is cowardly. All cowards argue, and all cowards can argue. It is only the courageous who take the jump into the unknown. The unknown cannot be argued about, obviously; that's why it is called the unknown.

You can argue about the known, you can come to conclusions about the known through thinking, but how are you going to come across the unknown? Thinking can give you only the old, that which has been known and experienced. Thinking cannot give you something that has never been experienced and never known. If you remain too obsessed with thinking you will be stuck. The unknown does not come from your past, the unknown enters from the future. The unknown does not come from your memory -- otherwise it would not be unknown. The unknown penetrates your memory but comes from some source we know nothing of, from some unknown source. Your memory has to give way: that's what I mean when I say listen sympathetically, get in tune. I'm not proposing a philosophical argument here. I will be simply telling you a story. With a story, you don't argue. With a story, you simply listen like a child. You enjoy its nuances, its turns, sudden turns. You simply start getting into its spirit, what the story wants to tell -- and it has much to say. And the deeper your empathy grows, the deeper the story will reveal itself to you.

Trust....Let trust be your approach towards Sufism. It is available only to those who trust. And remember again, only the courageous can trust. The cowardly always shrink back from the unknown.

From Page 18 (Surprising Facts about...)

Different types of rain

Stratiform rain

This type of rain falls from stratiform clouds in the form of steady precipitation over a wide area. It is caused by lifting air currents in the atmosphere and the collision of ice crystals in the clouds. Stratiform rain tends to last for long periods of time and produces moderate rain amounts.

Convective rain

Convective rain showers are caused by convection currents in the atmosphere that lift warm, moist air rapidly. This fast uplift leads to heavy downpours and thunderstorms. Convective rain is often intense but short-lived. These showers are common in tropical regions and during the summer in temperate climates.

Orographic rain

When moist air flows over mountainous terrain, it rises up the windward slope. As the air rises higher into colder levels of the atmosphere, it condenses into rain. By the time the air passes over the mountain, much of the moisture has already rained out, leaving little left to form rain on the leeward side. Orographic rain leads to high rainfall amounts on windward slopes and little precipitation in the rain shadow on the leeward side.

Monsoon rain

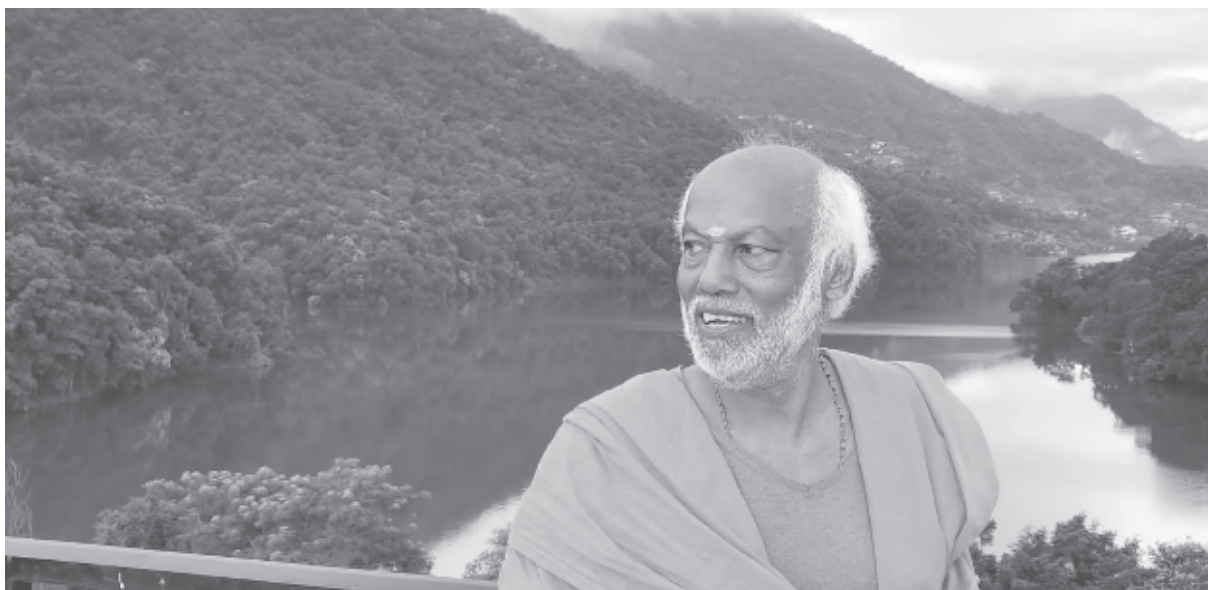
Monsoons are caused by seasonal shifts in wind direction which bring very wet and dry seasons. In the wet season, winds blow from the ocean onto land, bringing heavy rains. In the dry season, winds blow from the land out to sea, bringing little rain. Monsoons often produce torrential downpours and are influenced by temperature gradients between the land and sea. Monsoons are common in tropical Asia, Africa, and Central America.

Continued Page 10

SELF KNOWLEDGE

The Ultimate Human Heritage

Swami Suddhananda



If the ignorance of any kind is universal, the knowledge of the same must also be universal since ignorance is not exclusive to a man, a race, sex, colour or nationality, there is nothing exclusive about any knowledge. Knowledge in all its aspects must be available for all and let the man choose out of total freedom. There cannot and should not be any restrictions whatsoever for approaching or gaining any knowledge.

All of us know that we are ignorant of the creation around which we are a part, but not many of us know that we are also ignorant about our own Self. We can be conscious of the world, our body and our thoughts, but we do not understand and are therefore ignorant about the nature of all that exist in the creation, the body and the thoughts.

Let us therefore see the different levels or facades of ignorance.

- When I say, I am ignorant about the world, definitely it must never mean that I am not conscious of the world.
- What it means is, I may be conscious of the world, for example the mountain, but may not know that mountain is the Himalaya; as somebody has named it and I am not conscious of the name.
- When I say I am not conscious of the name, I am not announcing that I am not conscious. I am always conscious, but not of the name at this moment.
- So here the ignorance means, I am conscious of the name that is given. I am conscious of the object that is named, but I am not conscious of the association of that name with the corresponding object.
- So, what it means is I am always conscious but not conscious of the association of the name with the object.
- That is how I can be ignorant of many languages, except may be the mother tongue, describing the same object.
- What it means is I am conscious of the many languages while hearing the words as mere sounds

without being able to associate that name with the object

Thus I can be generally conscious and he general, 'ignorant' about many things in the world because of the names. The same principle can be applied to 'Self'. Until the name 'I' or 'aham' is given, we will not feel ignorant. We feel ignorant, though conscious about any object because we have not been yet associated it with name. That is why stupidly a botanist knowing all names may feel superior to a man of the jungle who may know all the plants and their usage but no names.

Similarly everybody is conscious, but until that sense of being the consciousness (both names) are named in so many words or 'I' etc.. nobody feels ignorant about himself! How funny! I say 'I am conscious and 'I am ignorant' in the same breath. This is true, in the matters of an objective knowledge, but not in case of the 'I' - the Self.

Let us start with ignorance about the mutt I am walking on the earth through my body, to experiencing the sounds, touches, forms, tastes and smells with my thoughts within. But I do not feel ignorant until some pain or trouble begins. The trouble can

begin in the world around when a volcano erupts, a cyclone lashes, a flood inundates, the drought or disease devastates. Suddenly the man wants to understand 'the nature' of the world where in a seemingly innocent universe such power are hidden and are unleashed without human intervention. The same principle is in the body, the thoughts and the emotions. If the natural disasters are inherent in the nature, diseases are inherent in the body and the emotions of all kinds seem to be inherent at a subtle level of thoughts. The encounter with natural disasters triggers the probing into the nature of the creation as even the disease, ill health trigger the probe into the nature of the body. This probe into the natural elements, trees, animals etc provide us an insight into the functioning of the creation around. That knowledge, whoever may discover it belongs to the whole world, the entire humanity. Though the sun, the wind and the rater are gross, the rain and the cyclone are visible, the process of evaporation, cloud formation, the play of the wind and the heat are not visible to the eyes.

So also in the body. The body is visible. The food is visible. But

the method of digestion, the enzyme, the disease, the virus are invisible. Hence those are understood with the extension of power to the machines through the sense organs and the body. A machine may have a leg to stand and a lens is an extension of the eyes - be it a microscope, a telescope or a periscope. Here the naming is inevitable at the discoveries are not natural phenomena. Somebody must investigate to discover and that investigation, discovery must be named at different stages for the next generation to follow the steps and to duplicate the test and to further improve upon it. The more the discoveries, the more the naming, the more becomes the ignorance when we won do not know the names, the principles and the names associated with the principles.

Thus we can be a) ignorant of a 'name', b) ignorant of an 'object' or 'principle', c) ignorant of the association. Therefore we can have a) the information (familiarity) of a name, b) the information of the object or principle, c) the knowledge - associating the name with the principle or the object.

Depending upon the ignorance, information or the knowledge about the creation and body, the man may pick up an identity such as 'I am ignorant'. 'I am informed'. 'I am knowledgeable' etc.. with so many subtle divisions at all the three levels. That leads to comparison and contrast and therefore to superiority and inferiority, less or more in-formed, ignorant or knowledgeable or least or most informed, ignorant or knowledgeable. This identity is at the level of the thoughts, with the 'I' thought playing the hero and the villain. It is the hero when it drags every condition to itself and is a villain when it falls a victim of an identity, the prisoner of its own making.

When thus, the thoughts become troublesome because 'I' is troubled, the enquiry into the thoughts and emotions begin. When this probe begins into the inner landscape, we discover that there is no emotion inherent in the object as even there is no indigestion in the food or the ignorance inherent in the object.

All along I am 'conscious' of all different perceptions and

thoughts. And the 'I' builds upon the thoughts to create emotions of likes, dislikes, desires etc to make the object desirable, likeable or disliked. From that emotion, the further built up is greediness to repeat an experience or anger that prevents the experience. The 'I' builds it all and gains more identities like. 'I desire'. 'I am angry'. 'I am greedy'. 'I am dissatisfied', 'I am lonely' etc. in addition to I am ignorant, informed, uninformed or knowledgeable.

Thus the 'I' owns up the relative ignorance of the objective world and the ignorance about one's own Self where the 'I' is tormented or confused by so many identities. We must understand that the relative knowledge will not take away the Absolute or Self ignorance, as even Self knowledge will not remove the relative ignorance.

The Self-knowledge is easy to gain as it is ever present as the 'consciousness' itself and we are always using the word 'I am conscious of every thought, body or object. A little exploration into inner landscape is essential. There are already many thoughts there as mere impressions or as know ledge and information of different kinds. Those explorers, the ancient Rishis have charted the landscape elaborately and well. The names have been given to different emotions and ultimately to be one's own Self. To be one's own Self, one need not perceive an object, speak a word or think a thought. Yet, because of the prior conscious and unconscious involvement with thoughts, speech and perceptions, different names are given to emotions moods and thoughts of various kinds.

Thus, the 'I' assuming the role of 'the knower' owns up all relative knowledge and ignorance to feel suffocated and sometimes elated by different roles. Each identity adds to the ignorance of the 'I'. The 'I' itself is a product of ignorance and then it grabs all thoughts to pick up many roles. Therefore, the answer to the question of the real identity of 'I', becomes really confusing when instead of understanding the meaning of the word I, the first role, we answer with another role or set of roles.

Thus the ignorance about the 'I' continues as the 'I' gets wedded to many different roles instead of looking at or 'being' the source of 'I'. This insight is Self knowledge where one discovers one's own Self without a name or a form. Everybody must be made to be aware of himself/herself.

There are many kinds of secular knowledge and religious beliefs and philosophies of different hues talking about the world, the individual and the God. Most of them leave the human child half way which is more dangerous than ignorance. At least in ignorance, one is unconscious, unaware of the limitation and bondage. But when with information of both secular and religious kind, we leave the individual with a strong individuality without the insight into his own nature such an informed person, empty within, creates a lot of suffering for himself and others around.



SPECIAL REPORTS

Puri Rath Yatra: Wonder of Chariot Making

Puri Rath Yatra is a “wonder in itself”. The making of the chariots of three sibling deities for the world-famous festival is one such wonder.

Though three gigantic chariots are constructed every year afresh for the annual rath yatra, they are made by traditional carpenters



with no formal training. Many of them have not even attended school.

“They have no manuals, architectural drawings, or modern machines, but a group of craftsmen make gigantic and identical chariots for Lord Jagannath and his two siblings in Puri every year, using only traditional knowledge,” says Sudarshan Mekap, the caretaker of the chariots.

As per Mekap, they do not use any modern instruments or take the help of any engineer. However, the fitness certificates for the chariots are given by government engineers after



verifying that they are suitable to roll on the roads, he said.

While Lord Jagannath's 'Nandighosh' chariot of 44 feet 2 inches, Lord Balabhadra's 'Taladhawaja' chariot is 43 feet 3 inches and Devi Subhadra's 'Darpadalana' chariot is 42 feet 3 inches. However, the makers of these chariots have no such measurements as feet and inches.

“The chariots are constructed afresh every year. There is no deviation in their heights, widths, and other key parameters for

centuries. However, new features are added to the chariots to make them more colorful and attractive,” Asit Mohanty, a researcher on the Jagannath culture said.

The three chariots are built from over 4,000 pieces of wood by a few families who have the hereditary rights to make them, he said, adding that the carpenters engaged in chariot construction do not have any formal training. They only have knowledge and techniques that have been trickled down from their forefathers.

Bijay Mohapatra, the chief 'Bishwakarma' (carpenter) of Lord Jagannath's 'Nandighosh' chariot having 16 wheels, said: “I have been engaged in chariot making for about four decades. I was trained by my father Lingaraj Mohapatra and he received training from my grandfather Ananta Mohapatra.” Only traditional equipment like chisels are used in the construction of the chariots, he said.

“It is a tradition and we are privileged to get the opportunity to serve the Lord,” Mohapatra said, adding that now his teenage nephew Rudra Mohapatra, a college student is under training.

“The senior carpenters make the younger ones learn the technique of chariot making and remember the measurements made through the hand,” he said.

Rudra said he has been in the Ratha Khala (yard) for 57 days during the college summer vacation. He will join studies a day after the rath yatra this year. “Though our children live outside Puri for a living, all of them come for two months and help their fathers in chariot making. It is considered to be a pious work for all of us,” Mohapatra said.

“Our measurements are in the units of 'haat' (hand size) and 'anguli' (finger size). There are no such units like feet or inches,” Mohapatra said.

Asked how the 'haat' size remains the same over centuries as the lengths of the hands of different persons are not similar, Mohapatra said: “My father has

given me a stick. This stick is considered as one 'haat'. It is equivalent to 20 inches. Twenty-five 'angulus' make a 'haat'. We use these measures to calibrate the height and width of the chariots.” Not only carpenters but also a group of artisans and blacksmiths are involved in the chariot-making work for generations.

While the 'Bishwakarma Sevaks' look after the main construction of chariots, 'Pahi Maharanas' fix the wheels of the chariots. There are others like 'Ojha Maharanas' (blacksmiths) who prepare nails, pins, clamps, and iron rings.

This apart, various wooden sculptures such as 'Ashta Manjari' (eight women) are fitted on the chariots. Covers, canopies, and flags made of cloth are prepared by tailors.

As many as 220 traditional craftsmen are engaged in chariot



making for 57 days,” said Mekap.

Another researcher Bhaskar Mishra said that Lord Jagannath's chariot is covered by red and yellow cloth and is constructed with 832 pieces of wood while Lord Balabhadra's chariot, 'Taladhawaja', having 14 wheels, is draped in red and green cloth.

Similarly, Devi Subhadra's chariot 'Darpadalana' having 12 wheels is covered with red and black cloth.

A team of engineers from the state government's works department and the railways is kept ready for any repair work in the event of a breakdown of the chariots, Mekap said.

After the completion of the festival, the chariots are dismantled and major portions of them are auctioned. The remaining wood is sent to the temple kitchen.

IMD predicts good Monsoon forecast

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has recently forecasted above-average monsoon rains in the country this year in its Updated Long Range Forecast Outlook, confirming its forecast of a good monsoon.

Quantitatively, the southwest monsoon seasonal rainfall over the country as a whole is likely to be 106 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA) with a model error of 4 per cent. Thus above normal rainfall is most likely over the country as a whole during the monsoon season from June to September 2024,” IMD said.

IMD has based the forecast of the good monsoon on the fact that the strong El Nino conditions which tend to disrupt the monsoon have weakened rapidly into weak El Nino conditions and are currently transitioning into ENSO-neutral conditions.

The latest climate model forecasts indicate ENSO-neutral conditions are likely to establish during the beginning of the monsoon season and La Nina conditions, which result in good rains, are likely to develop



during the later part of the monsoon season.

IMD has announced that this year the southwest monsoon is likely to set in over Kerala on May 31.

A good monsoon augurs well for the country's agricultural sector which was hit by erratic weather last year. The monsoon plays a key role in the Indian economy as close to 50 per cent of the

country's farmland does not have any other source of irrigation.

The monsoon rains are also crucial for recharging the country's reservoirs and aquifers from which the water can be used later in the year to irrigate crops.

India has emerged as a key exporter of foodgrains but had to resort to curbing overseas shipments of sugar, rice, wheat and onions in order to increase domestic supplies and keep prices in check due to the erratic monsoon last year which hit farm production.

The IMD defines average or normal rainfall as between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of a 50-year average of 87 cm (35 inches) for the June-Sept season.

From Page 08 (Massive Solar Flare Majestic...)

The geomagnetic storm witnessed recently was the most intense seen since 2003, according to a statement by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and led to disruptions in communications and GPS systems. On the geomagnetic storm index, it touched a nine, the maximum available, the space agency said.

One of the payloads on-board Aditya-L1 called ASPEX captured high speed solar wind, high temperature solar wind plasma (the charged particles expelled by the Sun), and an energetic ion flux. Two other instruments on the space-based observatory had over the previous few days seen multiple M and X-class flares from the same region where the recent one originated.

Chandrayaan-2 orbiter also captured the eruptive event from its orbit around the moon, ISRO said. The payload XSM on board detected the solar flares, with it being equipped to autonomously identify large flares and activate a mechanism to bring a filter in front of the detector. It also collected information on the local charge particle concentrations, which went up May 9 onwards.

The Indian Astronomical Observatory above Mount Saraswati in Ladakh has captured the Northern Lights with a 360-degree camera. India captures the rare Aurora lights on camera for the first time!

Conclusion

The sun hasn't spat out any flares stronger than X8.7 since September 2017, when it emitted an X11.8 and X13.3 flare within a few days of each other. All of these extreme solar phenomena — solar flares, sunspots and CMEs — become more common during the peak of the sun's 11-year activity cycle, known as solar maximum. The current cycle, solar cycle 25, began in 2019, and scientists expect that the sun may enter its solar maximum phase in 2025

High Court directs identification of Fake Teachers

The Orissa High Court has ordered the Director of Elementary Education to submit an update on the status of the identification of teachers who have been appointed in government schools by allegedly submitting fake educational certificates. The Court has also asked the concerned department to file an affidavit in this regard.

The two judge bench of Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh and Justice MS Raman directed that in the affidavit, the Director of Elementary Education shall also be required to make statement on the allegation in relation to admission of non-existent students for misappropriating the Midday Meal scheme fund.

According to Times of India, the High Court gave the order while hearing a six-year-old PIL that had raised issues pertaining to the appointments of teachers in various schools

under the School and Mass Education Department by allegedly submitting fake educational certificates.

As per the bench, it was evident from the order sheets and records that steps have been taken to identify such teachers appointed by allegedly producing fake certificates. Some of them have also been dismissed and criminal



cases have been registered against them. However, the process for the identification of such fake teachers is still underway.

As per an earlier affidavit filed by the Director of Elementary Education, as many as 384 such fake teachers have been identified so far and criminal proceedings were instituted against them.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MASSIVE SOLAR FLARE AND MAJESTIC AURORA

Massive Solar Flare

A dynamic solar flare occurred on May 13, 2024 from an active sunspot region called AR3664. The sun spat out the strongest solar flare of the current solar cycle, which began in 2019, according to a report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The monster flare is a category X8.7, making it considerably stronger than the X2.2 flare that erupted from the sun in the first week of May 2024 - triggering radio blackouts and widespread auroras on Earth that were visible as far south as Mexico.

Sprawling out at almost 200,000 km from end to end, the sunspot

class flares that are 10 times less powerful than X-class flares, followed by C-class flares which are 10 times weaker than M-class flares, B-class are 10 times weaker than C-class flares and finally, A-class flares, which are 10 times weaker than B-class flares and have no noticeable consequences on Earth. Within each class, numbers from 1-10 (and beyond for X-class flares) describe a flare's relative strength.

Solar Wind

It is a continual stream of protons and electrons from the sun's outermost atmosphere, the corona. These charged particles breeze through the solar system at speeds ranging from around

Er Mayadhar Swain

heated and distorted during storms, long-range radio communication that relies on sub-ionospheric reflection gets affected.

- Ionospheric expansion due to these storms can increase satellite drag and make their orbits difficult to control.
- Satellite electronics can be damaged through the buildup and discharge of static-electric charges.
- It can disrupt global navigation systems.
- It can create harmful geomagnetic-induced currents (GICs) in the power grid and pipelines.

Reports have been coming in from across Australia and Eastern Asia of frequencies 20 MHz or lower experiencing nearly a complete blackout.

How Radio Communication is Affected?

As the particles arrive at Earth's magnetic field, the protons whirl in and head toward the poles where they react with our atmosphere and start causing trouble for shortwave radio signal transmissions. These events can affect radio communications for aircraft traveling over the poles.

The radiation travels toward Earth at the speed of light and ionizes (gives electrical charge to) the top of Earth's atmosphere. This ionization causes a higher-density environment for the high-frequency shortwave radio signals to navigate through in order to support communication over long distances. The radio waves that interact with electrons in the ionized layers lose energy due to more frequent collisions, and this can lead to radio signals becoming degraded or completely absorbed.

Coronal Mass Ejection

Scientists have also noted that there was a coronal mass ejection (CME), a large expulsion of plasma and magnetic field, from the main eruption, which they are analysing. This could bring additional impacts to Earth in the coming days including issues with power grids, telecommunication networks, and to satellites in orbit.

The event prompted the NOAA to release its first G4-level Geomagnetic Storm Watch since 2005. NOAA classifies solar storms on a five-point scale, with G4 representing those that are "severe." Severe solar storms can cause voltage surges in the power grid and affect satellite and high-frequency-radio communications. Operators in these industries have adaptations to protect their equipment during

these storms, says NOAA space weather scientist Rob Steenburgh. These protections can include backup systems and radiation shielding, as well as

streaming solar wind and there are also solar storms. During one kind of solar storm called a coronal mass ejection, the Sun burps out a huge bubble of



[Aurora australis visible from Oatlands, Tasmania on May 11, 2024]

temporary changes in operations. People could know the storm via colourful auroras that was visible from the northern part of the continental U.S.—and possibly in southern states.

The sunspot group is similar in size to the one that threw off such an eruption of plasma and magnetic fields, called a coronal mass ejection (CME), in 1859 and caused the Carrington Event,

electrified gas that can travel through space at high speeds.

When a solar storm comes toward us, some of the energy and small particles, mainly electron, can travel down the magnetic field lines at the north and south poles into Earth's atmosphere. There, the particles interact with gases in our atmosphere resulting in beautiful displays of light in the sky.



[Aurora as seen in Ladakh]

the most intense geomagnetic storm ever recorded. That event disrupted the only mass communication at the time, the telegraph network, and caused worldwide auroras.

Solar Flares and Aurora

Frequently there are beautiful light shows in the sky near the North or South Pole. These lights are called auroras. Near the North Pole, it is called aurora borealis or northern lights and near the South Pole, it is called an aurora australis or the southern lights.

Along with heat and light; the sun sends lots of other energy and small particles towards Earth. The protective magnetic field around Earth shields us from most of the energy and particles, and we don't even notice them. But the Sun doesn't send the same amount of energy all the time. There is a constant

Oxygen gives off green and red light. Nitrogen glows blue and purple.

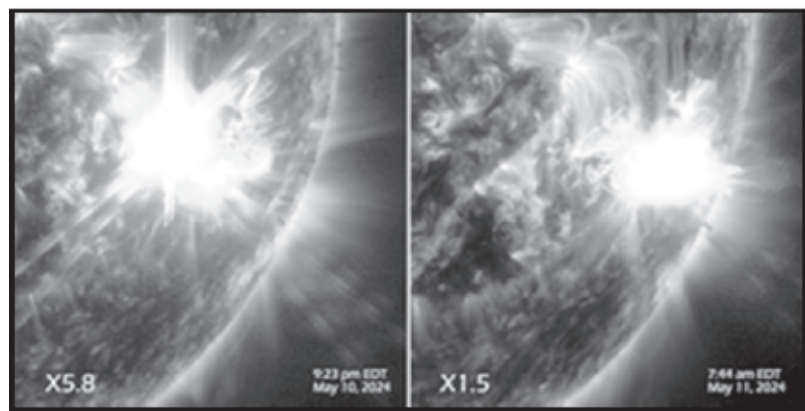
While the aurora is normally only visible close to the poles, this weekend it was spotted as far south as Hawaii in the northern hemisphere, and as far north as Mackay in the south.

India captures the rare Aurora lights

While most of India did not get to see the Aurora lights visible in many parts of the world recently, the solar flares that caused it were seen by Indian ground stations, the spacecraft Aditya-L1 studying the Sun from a point 1.5 million km away, and the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter circling the moon.

Continued Page 7

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[NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory captured these two views of massive solar flares, registering X5.8 and X1.5, respectively, on May 11, 2024]

AR3664 is currently 15 times wider than our home planet, according to Spaceweather.com. It is so big that it can be seen from Earth without the need for magnification.

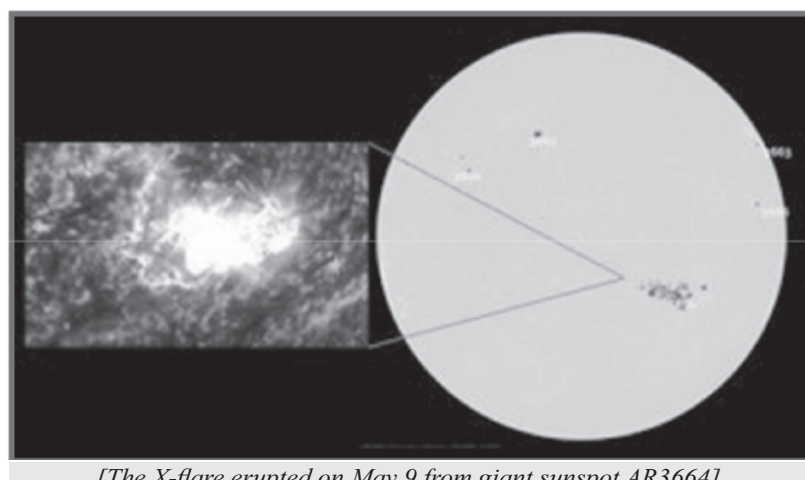
The sunspot AR3664, has been crackling with solar flares for days. On May 10, it erupted with an X5.8-class flare, and on May 13, a trio of X-class flares erupted from the sun measuring at X1.7, X1.3 and a whopping X8.7, the largest solar flare of the current 11-year solar cycle.

Solar flares are powerful bursts of electromagnetic radiation that result from magnetic disturbances on the sun. They occur when magnetic field lines in the sun's atmosphere tangle and snap, releasing large amounts of excess energy, including powerful X-rays and ultraviolet radiation. They are categorized by size into lettered groups, with X-class being the most powerful. Then there are M-

250 miles (400 km) per second to 500 miles (800 km) per second, in a plasma state. Solar magnetic field is embedded in the plasma and flows outward with the solar wind. Different regions of the Sun produce solar wind of different speeds and densities. When the solar wind reaches Earth, it sends a flurry of charged particles into the magnetosphere and along Earth's magnetic field lines, towards the poles.

Effects of Solar Wind

- It results in intense currents in the Earth's magnetosphere, changes in the radiation belts, and changes in the ionosphere, including heating the ionosphere and an upper atmosphere region called the thermosphere.
- These storms can heat the ionosphere, causing beautiful auroras on earth.
- Because the ionosphere is



[The X-flare erupted on May 9 from giant sunspot AR3664]

COURT MATTER

Orissa High Court expresses concern over misuse of POCSO Act

The Orissa High Court has expressed concerns over the misuse of the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act), especially by way of prosecution of young males in cases of mutual adolescent

children, they have also led to an increase in vindictive litigation, with false cases being filed against individuals under the act. However, it was never the legislature's intention to prosecute romantic relationships between young adults."



romantic relationships.

The Single Bench of Justice Sibó Sankar Mishra allowed a batch of petitions praying to quash criminal proceedings under the stringent legislation.

According to Live Law, the bench observed, "The POCSO Act was enacted with the ultimate objective of prohibiting non-consensual and forced sexual relationships with children, including child sexual abuse and sexual harassment. While the stringent provisions of the POCSO Act have contributed positively to reducing instances of sexual violence against

The Court was in seisin over a batch of petitions filed under Section 482 of the CrPC with prayers to quash FIRs and criminal proceedings under the POCSO Act against a

number of persons in different cases of sexual intercourse arising out of adolescent romantic relationships or promises of marriage. In all these cases victims were below the age of majority, i.e. 18 years while the alleged offences were committed.

"The growing instances where teenagers were involved in a romantic relationship with each other falls victim to the offences under the POCSO Act is a matter of concern. The teenage romance often turns into cohabiting consensually and the girl alleges rape due to pressure from the

family, fear of the society or when the boy refuses to marry. Since sexual intercourse with a minor is considered 'statutory rape', the criminal case is registered," the bench added.

Taking into account the fact that in all the cases, the parties claimed to have settled the disputes between them and they do not intend to pursue the litigation anymore, Justice Mishra formulated the vital question for consideration as to whether the High Court can quash criminal proceedings, particularly in heinous cases like rape, on the basis of mutual settlement between parties, Live Law reported.

In view of the fact that the victims are not desirous of pursuing the matter further, the possibility of securing a conviction is not only remote but it may adversely affect the mental, emotional, and educational well-being of the victim and the happy conjugal and family life they are leading with perhaps one or more children born out of such union," the judge said.

He also said that continuing proceedings for prosecution and punishment may also have an undesired and self-defeating effect of punishing a victim as well, which can go against the objective and purpose of the Act itself.

Accused in Jail can seek Anticipatory Bail in separate cases: Orissa High Court

The Orissa High Court has affirmed that an accused person, who is already in jail in connection with a criminal case, can still seek anticipatory bail for another case without any legal impediment.

As per a report published in Bar and Bench, Justice Shashikant Mishra, clarified that such anticipatory bail, if granted, would be effective only if the accused is arrested in connection with the subsequent case after his release from custody in the previous case.

The Court's judgment on April 10 stated that the Code of Criminal Procedure does not contain any provision that deprives the accused of the right to seek liberty or prevents the investigating agency from probing the case solely because the accused is already in custody for another case.



It further stated that there is no statutory restriction for an accused who is in custody in connection with one case to seek anticipatory bail in another case registered against them.

The Court made the observation while addressing a series of petitions filed by individuals who were already in jail for their alleged involvement in one criminal case but who later sought anticipatory bail in connection with separate criminal cases registered subsequently against them.

The Court highlighted that the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) lacks a specific provision addressing the scenario where an individual who is already in custody in connection with one case is sought to be re-arrested or remanded in another case.

In such a scenario, the judge observed that the accused can only be remanded in connection with the subsequent case based on court orders.

"Can the order of the remand in such a situation be equated with an act of arrest? ... Since he is already arrested and in custody, he can only be taken on remand for the purpose of investigation, if required ... If such order granting remand is passed, it would no longer be open to the accused to seek anticipatory bail but he can seek regular bail," the Court explained.

Another potential scenario is when an individual who is arrested in one case is subsequently released from prison, only to find themselves required for arrest again in connection with a separate criminal case.

The Bench proceeded to conclude that there is no legal barrier preventing such an accused person from applying for anticipatory bail even before their release from prison.

The Court held that all rights conferred on the accused, as well as the investigating agencies, are independently protected in each separate case.

"As it is not possible to arrest a person already in custody, it follows that when, on being released from custody in the former case, he is sought to be arrested in the new case, there is no reason why he shall be restrained from moving the Court beforehand to arm himself with necessary protection in the form of anticipatory bail to protect himself from such a situation," the Court further said.

The Court also said that investigating agencies have the option to approach the concerned court seeking the remand of accused persons already in jail if their custody is deemed necessary in connection with another case.

The Court observed that if such a request for remand is approved, then the only recourse left for the accused to secure release from prison is to file a regular bail plea.

The Court also emphasized that the legislative intent behind Section 438 (anticipatory bail) of the CrPC is to safeguard individuals from the disgrace of arrest and from being subjected to undue humiliation and loss of dignity.

The Court held that their anticipatory bail applications were maintainable and allowed the same.

'No work, No pay' can't be Universally applied, says Orissa High Court

The Orissa High Court recently ordered that the principle of 'no work, no pay' cannot be universally applied, especially when the employer is at fault for not utilizing the services of the respective employee.

As per a report in Live Law, single bench of Justice Sashikanta Mishra gave the order while hearing a petition. Reportedly, the petitioner was appointed as lecturer in history at Joda Women's College on 5.09.1988 and was subsequently terminated by the governing body of the College on 23.09.1995. She appealed termination, and the appeal was allowed by the Director, Higher Education, Odisha. The governing body was instructed to reinstate the petitioner and take further action according to the rules.

However, the governing body failed to comply with the Director's order. The development led the petitioner to file a writ petition in Orissa High Court in 1996. It was disposed of directing the concerned authority to implement the Director's order effectively.

Following instructions from the Director's office, the petitioner rejoined the College on 10.01.1996 and continued her



duties until her retirement on 31.01.2023, after being transferred to Siddheswar College. The petitioner approached the High Court and filed a writ petition. She claimed that she was not paid her salary from 10.01.2006 onwards, nor was the period of illegal termination from 23.09.2005 to 09.01.2006 regularized. In response, the Director, of Higher Education, Odisha, stated that a provisional differential salary was released for a certain period, but regularization of the aforementioned period was pending due to inaction by the governing body.

The High Court noted that the petitioner's termination was deemed illegal by the Director of Higher Education in a subsequent ruling. Despite this,

the order to reinstate the petitioner was not adhered to until 10.01.2006. Both the petitioner and the management sought legal recourse throughout this period with the petitioner urging the governing body to enforce the Director's order and the governing body attempting to challenge the Director's decision.

The Court held that while reinstatement is typically granted when termination is deemed illegal, the award of back wages is not automatic. Various factors come into play, including whether the employee was gainfully employed during the relevant period. Furthermore, the High Court held that the 'no work no pay' principle cannot be universally applied, especially when the employer is at fault for not utilizing the employee's services, Live Law reported.

GOVERNANCE

Toothy terror: Human crocodile conflict to be big poll issue as villages around Odisha's Bhitarkanika vote on June 1

Locals allege politicians have not done enough to make are safe from crocodile attacks, which have led to 50 deaths since 2014.

Human Crocodile Conflict (HCC) will play an important role as voters get ready to head to polling booths in villages around

He is survived by his wife Gita, three daughters and a son.

“My husband is the latest victim in a growing number of crocodile attacks in the riverside villages adjoining and away from the Park. I will not cast my vote in favour of any candidate as all

a saltie grabbed him and dragged him into the water. Providentially, some alert villagers managed to beat the reptile with some bamboo sticks and it let go. But not before it had disabled Dalei forever.

“I always recall the terror, the pain and the violent struggle against the crocodile. I suffered serious injuries on my left hand and lost my thumb. I used to work as a plumber in a private construction company in Mumbai. After this incident, I lost my livelihood,” he said.

The survivor started a betel leaf (paan) shop in the village last year. “I shiver each time I see a crocodile. I will not cast my vote in the coming polls as all parties are unconcerned about the HCC issue,” said Kabindra.

A poll issue

Ajaya Mandal of Talacua village claimed that sundry political leaders have been trying their best to appease residents of the villages around the Park. But most voters are in no mood to be hoodwinked by the candidates.

“Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leaders are hell-bent on garnering the votes of locals by raising the safety factor of the villagers in the coming polls. But we are not believing them,” said Mandal.

“The opposition BJP and Congress have been targeting the incumbent BJD for its inability to resolve HCC in the Assembly segments of Rajnagar, Mahakalapada and Aul under the Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat,” said Satish Rout of Rajnagar.

Rout added that the attacks by the two parties would make it difficult for BJD candidates to win voter hearts and minds in crocodile-inhabited riverside villages.

Madan Mohan Rout of Rajnagar noted that Dhrub Charan Sahoo, a BJD candidate from Rajnagar Assembly seat within Bhitarkanika, had won the constituency in 2019.

“Now, he is again seeking votes from us. BJD is facing a tougher competition as most of the riverside villagers are determined to teach a lesson to the ruling party for not resolving their woes,” said Rout.

“The slipshod attitudes of the state government to effectively tackle the issue are likely to dominate the minds of voters in

these villages during the coming polls,” said Alekha Pradhan of Nimpur.

The forest department, when contacted, stated that it was doing all it could to prevent HCC.

“The forest department shut down artificial hatching and rearing of crocodiles in Bhitarkanika on February 24 this year after the crocodile population was found to have reached 1,811 in the park. The hatching and breeding of crocodiles had otherwise continued for 50 years,” said

Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav, the divisional forest officer of Bhitarkanika National Park.

“We have recently erected barricades at 120 river ghats around Bhitarkanika in Aul, Rajnagar, Rajkanika and Pattamundai blocks to prevent crocodiles from attacking people,” Yadav added.

He noted that the department was also warning villagers not to venture into the water by distributing posters and pamphlets and through loudspeakers.



Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park in the state's Kendrapara district on June 1, to elect a new Assembly as well as members of Parliament.

Bhitarkanika is a vast tract of mangrove forest and brackish water swamp. It is the home of around 1,811 saltwater or estuarine crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*) as per this year's reptile census. The species is the largest living reptile on earth. In India, it is only found in Bhitarkanika, the Sundarbans and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The saltwater crocodile is a territorial reptile in the water. It is also among the few crocodylian species (consisting of true crocodiles, alligators, caimans and the gharial) most likely to attack humans.

'Salties' have killed 50 people in the villages around the Park since 2014. Many people have also been maimed. The reptiles have also taken several livestock including cattle, water buffaloes, goats and sheep in these areas.

June 1 marks the seventh and final phase of voting in the marathon general elections to elect a new Lok Sabha.

'Beware the water'

A saltwater crocodile attacked and killed 34-year-old farmer Nimai Mallick (34) at Dakhinabheda village around Bhitarkanika National Park under the Rajnagar Assembly segment on March 8, 2024.

Mallick's was the seventh such death reported from the villages near Bhitarkanika in just over seven months and 23 human deaths in 23 months.

leaders have failed to protect us from crocodiles,” said Gita.

Forty-year-old Anam Jena of Palatpur village also feels that promises by political leaders are hollow. His wife, Joshna, was killed by a crocodile eight months back while she was taking a bath in a local river.

“Political leaders shed only crocodile tears on our woes. The villages located within the periphery of the Park have been facing the brunt of crocodile attacks for years now,” Jena said.

Jagannath Acharya of Nimapur village also has a tragic tale to relate. His 10-year-old nephew was killed by a crocodile last year while bathing in the river.

“The Bramahani river is now teeming with hundreds of crocodiles. Riverside villagers are thus debarred from using the river's water for any purpose. Crocodiles also enter village ponds in the villages. The dangers posed by crocodile attacks is definitely an election issue in our village,” said Acharya.

“Crocodiles are a big problem. Nobody can go and even take a bath in the river. Even livestock cannot go near. When they go to the river to drink, they are killed. Many fishermen have left their traditional fishing in the crocodile-inhabited rivers,” said Rangadhar Jena, a fisherman of Iswarapur village.

Kabindra Dalei, a 46-year-old plumber of Dangmala village, is a testament to the HCC in the villages around Bhitarkanika.

Dalei was washing his feet in the village pond two years ago, when

From Page 5 (Surprising Facts about...)

Acid rain and its causes

Acid rain refers to rain that has become acidic due to atmospheric pollutants like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. These pollutants come from man-made sources such as coal power plants, vehicles, and industrial activity. When sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides are released into the atmosphere, they react with water molecules to form sulfuric acid and nitric acid. The pollutants then bind with rain droplets or snowflakes and fall to the ground. The effects can be devastating to plants, animals, infrastructure, and human health.

Acid rain primarily impacts aquatic ecosystems, forests, and buildings. As the acidity of lakes and streams increases, it limits the survival of fish and other aquatic plants and animals. In forests, acid rain strips nutrients from the soil and damages leaves. Man-made structures like buildings and monuments also suffer damage as the acidic water chemically wears away stone and metal. Human health can be indirectly affected by acid rain through the inhalation of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide gasses, as well as the ingestion of contaminated fish and crops. Respiratory diseases and other illnesses become more prevalent in areas with high levels of these air pollutants.

Rain as habitant for Life

Rain is essential for sustaining life on Earth. As rain falls from the sky, it carries nutrients and minerals that nourish plant life, animals, and humans.

Habitat for microorganisms

Rain contains atmospheric gasses like oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen that are necessary for the growth of algae, bacteria, and other microorganisms. These microscopic life forms are at the base of the food chain and a food source for tiny insects and small fish.

Water source

Precipitation replenishes streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans, providing homes and drinking water for fish, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Many species rely on seasonal rain patterns for reproduction and migration. As rain permeates the soil, it seeps into underground aquifers that supply fresh water for plants and billions of people worldwide. Read more about Water Sources here.

Nutrient recycling

When rain falls through the atmosphere, it absorbs dust, pollen, sea salt, and other particles. These nutrients then get deposited in the environment, fertilizing the soil and reintroducing essential minerals to the landscape. The nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur compounds in rain are especially important for plant growth in rainforests, grasslands, and agricultural areas. In myriad ways, rain sustains the web of life on Earth. Although the water cycle is constant, changing weather patterns can disrupt rainfall and threaten natural habitats. By protecting watersheds and minimizing pollution, we can help ensure that rain continues to nourish the planet for generations to come.

Changes in precipitation patterns due to climate change

Climate change is causing shifts in precipitation patterns around the world. As the planet continues to warm, these changes are projected to intensify. According to the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), wet and dry seasons are becoming more extreme in many regions. Some areas are experiencing heavier rain and snowfall, leading to increased flooding, while other places are seeing more frequent and severe droughts.

FINANCE

Gender Responsive Budgeting in India

Pradeep Kumar Panda, Economist, Bhubaneswar

Gender budgeting is a public financial management (PFM) tool to translate the gender commitments into budgetary commitments. The gender responsive PFM is a fiscal innovation, and it transcends four stages including knowledge building, creating institutional structures, capacity building and installing accountability

public expenditure analysis. The significant elements of fiscal policy viewed through a gender perspective are budgetary allocations, actual expenditure and taxation; fiscal decentralisation and ex-ante gender budgeting; fiscal devolution (intergovernmental

'gender lens' to the identified processes, resources and institutional mechanisms; and arrives at a desirable benefit incidence. GRB as an innovation has four specific components: knowledge processes and networking; institutional mechanisms; learning processes and building capacities; and public accountability and benefit incidence.

GRB is emerging as a significant socio-economic innovation tool for transparency and accountability by analysing budgetary policies and identifying their effects on gender development. It has two inevitable dimensions: equity and efficiency. It is a misnomer that GRB is making separate budgets for women. It is also wrongly interpreted as earmarking of funds for gender development. GRB is defined as an analysis of the entire budget process through a gender lens to identify the gender differential impacts and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments.

The institutional arrangements are crucial for the advancement of gender budgeting as a fiscal innovation. Gender budgeting is a powerful PFM tool to ensure gender equality outcomes, which has inter-sectoral cross-cutting policy concerns. It is therefore significant for the governments to organize themselves to ensure that decisions on policies and programs to reduce gender inequalities receive equal attention as areas of spending

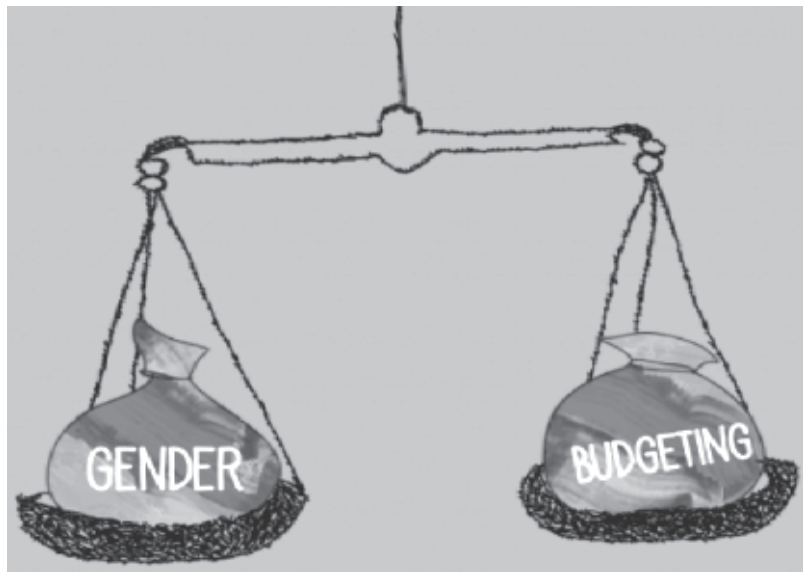
commitments.

Gender responsive PFM in the form of gender budgeting has led to gender mainstreaming in the budget, with more and more prima facie gender neutral sectors adopting gender budgeting and reporting to the Ministry of Finance on their efforts to address gender equality through fiscal policies. Accountability and transparency are part of the objectives of gender budgeting. However, the integration of gender budgeting statements into the budget documents for transparency; and the relevant accountability mechanisms were largely absent in the region. India is an exception, as India has integrated gender within the PFM within the four stages of fiscal innovation.

Gender budgeting is most effective when it involves changes to both policy-making processes – such as determining budgeting allocations and designing programmes – and administrative systems – such as tracking expenditures and monitoring programme outcomes. Changes may be made at a policy level through executive branch decision-making, and/or formalized in budget circulars, the national budget law, or a separate law on gender budgeting. Almost all countries use a budget call circular or equivalent document that serves as an official notice from the finance ministry instructing government agencies how to submit their annual budget bids. Formalization of the

GRPFM would be crucial for the sustained impact of gender budgeting on gender equality outcomes.

The gender responsive PFM in India is known worldwide for its



mechanisms.

Gender budgeting is emerging as a significant socio-economic tool to analyze budgetary policies to identify their effects on gender equity. Gender budgeting does not mean making separate budgets for women nor is it confined to analysis of earmarked funds for programmes exclusively targeted for women within budgets. It refers to analysis of the entire budget through a gender lens to identify gender-differential impacts and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. It enhances the transparency and accountability of revenue and public expenditure.

Prima facie, the budget may appear to be gender neutral; but due to differences in the socially determined systemic roles played by women and men, budgetary policies have differential impacts across gender. As a consequence, gender neutrality of budgetary policies can turn to gender blindness due to the fact that the women and men are at asymmetric levels of development on the socio-economic scale. Gender budgeting is not "women budgeting"; rather, it is an analysis of budgets to ascertain the relative benefits (or losses) derived by each gender from a particular fiscal programme/project.

Gender budgeting constitutes one among many macroeconomic policy tools to address gender equity; the prominent among other tools such as monetary policy, trade policy and financial deregulation policy. The gender budgeting is analysed within the overall framework of fiscal policy, and does not focus exclusively on

fiscal transfers) and aid effectiveness. However, most gender budgeting experiments worldwide have been largely confined to expenditure-side analysis of budgets.

The Public Financial Management (PFM) frameworks for gender budgeting includes the fiscal innovation components of gender budgeting and World Bank by the PEFA Secretariat identifying the nine indicators of gender responsive PFM (GRPFM). Gender budgeting is defined as fiscal innovation and suggested a gender budgeting framework with four

components – model building, institutional mechanisms, capacity building and accountability mechanisms. Innovation is defined as a way of transforming a new concept into tangible processes, resources and institutional mechanisms in which a benefit meets identified problems. GRB is a fiscal innovation in that it translates the gender commitments into fiscal commitments through applying a

which are under the authority of a specific minister and ministry. However in many countries have ministries of women or equivalent, of course, but such ministries do not necessarily have responsibility for all areas of spending that reduce gender inequalities. Therefore gender budgeting as a fiscal innovation requires strong institutional mechanisms to translate the gender commitments into fiscal

gender budgeting initiative through budget circular has been termed gender budgeting by "fiscal fiat".

The analysis of "process" indicators of gender responsive PFM (GRPFM) reveals that India is successful in integrating a gender lens within the budget cycle, including in the financial planning and allocation, and in effective implementation. However, a legally mandated



sustainability and accountability. As India has advanced in gender responsive PFM since 2004-05, it is important to analyse the link between gender-responsive PFM and gender outcomes.

Gender responsive PFM (GRPFM) has a positive and significant impact on gender parity in education at the upper primary school and lower secondary school levels. The conditional transfers are not significant (Table 4). The results also suggest that economic growth per se is insufficient, given the weak impact of real income changes, and therefore that the government needs to take specific and focused public policy planning and budgeting measures to ensure gender equality outcomes in India. The dependent variables are the gender equality index (GEI) which is captured through female to male ratio of education outcomes in primary, upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools in India. The unconditional fiscal transfers through Finance Commissions seem to have a direct effect on gender equality outcomes measured by parity in enrolment compared to conditional transfers and therefore integrating gender criteria in intergovernmental formula-linked fiscal devolution would have positive effects on gender equality.

Gender-responsive PFM is very crucial for promoting gender equality outcomes. However, the exact institutional mechanism and fiscal design matter in translating the GRPFM into better gender outcomes. The empirical investigation suggests that unconditional tax transfers have a relatively greater impact on gender equality outcomes than conditional grants. This calls for the 16th Finance Commission to integrate a gender criterion in the intergovernmental fiscal transfer formula. The channels of impact of tax transfers on gender equality outcomes require meticulous analysis with more detailed fiscal variables across income quintiles and demographic patterns.



T20 WORLD CUP 2024

Former England great terms India 'predictable'

Rohit Sharma led Indian team will look to end its 11-year drought for an ICC title when the Men in Blue will take part in the upcoming T20 World Cup 2024 to be played in USA and West Indies.



However, former England great David Lloyd was severely critical of India's approach in the ICC tournaments.

During a recent interaction on why India fail to step up in the

high-pressure situations of the knockouts, Lloyd insisted that the Indian team doesn't want to take risks.

"The Indian team is quite a predictable team. The shackles are not off," said Lloyd.

"I would think the opposition accept the quality.. yeah, good players these. But they ain't taking a risk with bat or ball. So, you'd think of them as 'yeah, they will have their moments,' but they wouldn't be really threatening," he added.

Notably, India will kickstart their T20 World Cup campaign against Ireland on June 5. The Men in Blue will lock horns with arch-rivals Pakistan in New York four days later.

Yuvraj Singh bats for Rishabh Pant

Upcoming T20 World Cup 2024 to be held in USA and West Indies is just round the corner. Meanwhile, former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has preferred Rishabh Pant over Sanju Samson for the wicketkeeper-batsman's role in the Indian playing XI.

The legendary cricketer also backed under-fire Hardik Pandya to produce something 'special' in the marquee event despite enduring a torrid form.

Both Pant and Samson are currently in brilliant form in the ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL). However, India vice-



T20 World Cup 2024: Major concerns for Team India

After winning the inaugural edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in South Africa, the trophy has eluded India for 17 long years. The 2024 edition of the marquee event, to be held in USA and West Indies, is less than a month away. Let's have a look at some of the major concerns of Team India ahead of the mega event.

Opening Issue

It is not yet certain who will open for India in the T20 World Cup 2024 which is just round the corner. Based on the current form in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL), some experts are of the opinion that Virat Kohli should be the opening partner of

SKY's Inconsistency

India's Mr 360 degree batter Suryakumar Yadav (SKY) is arguable the best T20 batter for the Men in Blue. However, his inconsistency in IPL 2024 is a matter of concern. Moreover, the explosive batter is yet to produce a defining moment for India in ICC tournaments.

If India opt to open with Jaiswal and Rohit, SKY may face increased pressure as he is likely to receive fewer deliveries to settle in, with Kohli slated to bat at number three.

Only three pacers

India has included four spinners and only three pacers in the

Kuldeep Yadav, and Yuzvendra Chahal are the four spinners selected in the Indian team. Considering the all-round abilities of Jadeja and Axar, it will be a herculean task for the team think tank to select the ideal spin combination suitable for the match situation considering the kind of surface and weather condition.

Lack of Finisher

Omission of a finisher like Rinku Singh has also raised question marks. Rinku's versatility in positions and ability to smash sixes at will make his absence felt, especially in high-scoring chases akin to many IPL encounters.



southpaw Yashasvi Jaiswal and skipper Rohit Sharma should be pushed down the order.

However, considering the expected slower pitches, especially in the US, the partnership of Rohit and Kohli offers a blend of experience and skill. However, it lacks the left-handed element that Jaiswal brings to the mix. The team management seems to be perplexed over the issue.

squad. The pacers are Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, and Arshdeep Singh. The development suggests that India is banking on all-rounder Hardik Pandya to be fully fit and capable of bowling his full quota of four overs in every match. However, considering Pandya's injury history, it will be too much demanding for the vice-captain.

Spin Combination

Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel,

Knockout Jinx

Since clinching the ICC Champions Trophy in England in 2013, India's journey has been marked by five final losses and four semi-final exits. Question mark has been raised by several experts and fans over the India team's ability to maintain composure under pressure during big matches of ICC tournaments.

captain Hardik has struggled to find his batting and bowling rhythm in the mega event.

However, Yuvraj remains optimistic about all-rounder Hardik's impact in the T20 World Cup.

"If you look at the IPL form, Hardik's not done well. Looking at his background for India, what he's done for India, it is important that he's in the squad. I think his bowling is going to be important, and his fitness is going to be important. And I think he might do something really special in this World Cup," said Yuvraj during an interaction.

Notably, India will begin their T20 World Cup campaign against Ireland on June 5. The Men in Blue will lock horns with arch-rival Pakistan on June 9.

Nepal cricketer denied US visa despite being acquitted in rape case

Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane has been denied visa by US embassy to travel with the national team for the upcoming T20 World Cup 2024 to be played in USA and West Indies.

Lamichhane was acquitted in a rape case by the Nepal High Court a week earlier.

"And the @USEmbassyNepal did it again what they did back in 2019, they denied my Visa for the T-20 World Cup happening in USA and West Indies. Unfortunate. I am sorry to all the well wishers of Nepal Cricket," wrote Lamichhane on his social media account X (earlier known as Twitter).

Lamichhane was proven innocent of charges in a case dating back to 2022 after he was accused of assault by an 18-year-old woman.



Lamichhane was the first-ever Nepal player to feature in the Indian Premier League (IPL). The Nepal cricketer was on the road to a comeback to professional cricket following the court's hearing ahead of the marquee event.

Notably, the Scotland cricket team players had refused to shake hands with Lamichhane after their 3-wicket loss to Nepal in last February.

SPORTS AFFAIR

Border-Gavaskar Trophy: CA urges Indian fans to bring traditional instruments like Dhol

The much awaited Border-Gavaskar Trophy will be organised in Australia later this year. Indian fans in Australia will be able to cheer for Team India in dedicated seats in special 'fan zones' set aside at every venue by Cricket Australia.

As per the schedule, India will lock horns with Australia in a five-match Test series, starting from November 22, 2024 and ending on January 7, 2025. While the first Test will be held at Perth

Stadium, the second at Adelaide Oval and the third one at Brisbane's Gabba. The last two Tests will be hosted at MCG in Melbourne (the Boxing Day Test) and SCG in Sydney (the first Test of 2025) respectively.

Cricket Australia has urged the Indian fans to wear blue attire and bring traditional instruments such as the dhol for a family-friendly experience during the Test series.

“Aligned with Cricket Australia's

Multicultural Action Plan, the fan zones will foster an inclusive environment for Indian cricket fans and create an electrifying atmosphere. Once they are on sale, fans are encouraged to secure their seats in the Indian fan zones and help enhance the vibrant atmosphere by donning blue attire and bringing traditional instruments such as the dhol for a family-friendly experience,” read a statement from Cricket Australia.



India's first-ever Hybrid Pitch

Cricket is all about innovations and taking the way forward Dharmshala has become the first Indian venue to introduce hybrid pitches.

As many as four artificial turfs were recently unveiled at the picturesque venue in presence of IPL Chairman Arun Dhumal and Paul Taylor, a former England cricketer and SIS's international cricket director.

The project was undertaken by SISGrass, a UK-based company specialised in synthetic turf production.

According to Dhumal, the

introduction of hybrid pitches is set to revolutionize cricket in India, following their success in iconic venues like Lord's and The Oval in England.

What is hybrid pitch?

The hybrid pitch combines natural turf with synthetic fibres to make it more durable. It reduces the wear and tear across a full-fledged season. With the usage of five per cent artificial material, the wickets ensure that the traditional characteristics of a cricket pitch are retained.

How the artificial pitch is produced?

'Universal Machine' is used for preparing the hybrid surfaces. It was originally manufactured by SISGrass in 2017. The machine has been instrumental in preparing numerous wickets at various English County venues. Subsequently, the machine will be taken to Ahmedabad and Mumbai to create further such artificial pitches.

Notably, the Dharamshala outfield faced criticism during the 2023 ODI World Cup for its outfield and wicket.



Elon Musk predicts 'chess will be fully solved in 10 years'

CEO of SpaceX and Tesla and owner of X Elon Musk has predicted that chess will essentially 'be solved' within 10 years just like checkers. However, Musk's opinion drew sharp responses from some of the world's top grandmasters and others in the chess community.

“Computers are so much better than humans at chess, it's absurd. I predict that chess will be essentially fully solved (like checkers) within 10 years,” said Musk.

However, Musk's comment drew sharp reactions from the chess community across the globe.

In response to Musk's comment, Emil Sutovsky, the CEO of chess' global governing body FIDE, said, “Engines haven't advanced much for few years now. Even the task of solving all positions with 9 pieces can't be completed. It'll take years to cover 10 pieces, and you have 32. Engines are incomparably better than humans for 20 years now, but no checkers-type solution expected.”

Peter Heine Nielsen, who has been a trainer for both Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen, said: “From a technical aspect I quite agree with Musk's takes on chess. For practical purposes chess is close to being solved. And from a general game perspective, the lag of 'fog of war' hurts chess. But chess is the perfect game from a sporting perspective, and truly global.”

“In a practical sense it is close to being solved. Any reasonable question we have, the computer will give a very precise answer to. There are no big 'mysteries' left,” he added.

“In some sense, agree, 'fully enough' to understand almost everything about the game. But still humans competing each other will be interesting for public if we find a way to make sure no computer help possible during the games. Public will wonder who of two players is dumber,” tweeted former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik.

Earlier, Musk had claimed that he found chess too simple to be useful in real life. He had also taken digs at former World Champion Garry Kasparov, calling him an 'idiot'.



When a cricketer won Man of the Match award without bowling & batting for first time!



Fielding sensation Gus Logie

Generally, the Man of the Match award is bagged by the batter who lead the team to victory by scoring big. Then there are also the bowlers who pick up crucial wickets to guide the team to victory to bag the prestigious award.

However, in 1986, a member of the West Indies team was awarded Man of the Match even when he did not bat or bowl during the match! It was the West Indies' Gus Logie who for the first time received the Man of the Match award purely for his fielding efforts.

Logie was adjudged the Man of the Match in a match between the West Indies and Pakistan at the Sharjah Stadium in a 1986 Champions Trophy clash. He pulled off three impressive catches and two run-outs to bag the top award in the match.

Logie managed to take out Pakistan's openers and Ijaz Ahmed with superb catches. Then he went on to run out Asif Mujtaba and to directly hit the stumps from square leg to dismiss Javed Miandad.

West Indies managed to dismiss Pakistan for 143 and won the match by nine wickets. This was the first time in international cricket history that a fielder was given the Man of the Match award without having batted or bowled!

Former South Africa great Jonty Rhodes has also won man of the match award for his spectacular fielding skills during the 1992 World Cup.

PERSONALITY

Sachin Tendulkar: The batter you know, the mentor you don't

Pradeep Kumar Panda, Paralakhemundi, Gajapati

Sachin Tendulkar's name is synonymous with records as the Mumbai-born scaled numerous milestones during his playing career and still holds plenty of records in international cricket even after 10 years of retirement.

While Sachin's match-winning ability as a batter is not unknown to anyone, very few are aware of his role as a mentor and how he helped his fellow teammates overcome adversities and challenges during their playing careers.

As the Master Blaster turns 51 on April 24, 2024, let's try to shed light on Sachin 'the mentor' who came to the rescue of Virat Kohli when the latter was going through the most distressing periods of his international career.

Virat always looked up to the Master Blaster since childhood and found inspiration in him. He forged many match-winning partnerships with Sachin across formats to help India bask in glory before the Master bid adieu to international cricket.

When Sachin retired from the game in November 2013, the entire world celebrated his illustrious career and many thought that it was the end of Sachin's contribution to Indian cricket.

Though Sachin has not coached the Indian men's cricket team in any form thus far, the 51-year-old has and continues to make key contributions to Indian cricket by grooming players and sharing his invaluable inputs.

While many know Sachin's role at Mumbai Indians in grooming budding talent, very few are aware of how Sachin came to Virat's rescue when the latter was going through the toughest phase of his international career and was even struggling to put bat to ball.

High on India's success in the ICC Champions Trophy in 2013 in English conditions, India were buoyant when they toured England for a five-match Test series and also a white-ball series in 2014.

Virat had scored 176 runs at an impressive average of 58.66 during the Champions Trophy and therefore was confident of getting plenty of runs for India in the Test series.

However, Virat endured a horrid red-ball series against the Three Lions with the willow in hand and could only manage 134 in five games at a below-par average of 13.40.

Virat's failure cast a major shadow on his international future and allowed his critics to have a go at him. While many people wrote the champion cricketer off, Virat believed in himself and sought his idol's help to end his slump.

Virat came back to India and met Sachin in Mumbai to iron out the flaws that had crept into his technique and were ailing his form.

"I came back and went to Bombay for 10 days. I spoke to

him. He spent time with me. He said he watched me in England and helped me with a few technical things that are important at this level, in terms of getting a good stride in, always having intent when playing the ball and never being unsure of what to do at the crease," Virat Kohli told The Daily Telegraph in an interview.

"I never had a forward press but he told me you should go forward to a fast bowler like you would defend a spinner. Do it with the same conviction. It is the only way you can be in a good position to tackle swing, seam or anything you want. We ended up speaking a lot during that phase. Those things worked for me," Kohli said.

Cognizant of the fact that Virat was battling mental challenges as well, Sachin advised him to have a calm demeanour and focus on what worked for him instead of bothering about what was working for people around him.

"He told me about the importance of staying mentally

relaxed. 'If you do not feel like hitting the ball, don't hit it. Do not look at other people having a great net session for long hours, go off, try and do the same thing

Sachin's mentorship worked wonders for Virat as he went on to have a dream red-ball series against Australia in 2014-2015.

Virat finished the four-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy as the



and come out frustrated.' That helped me a lot," added Virat.

"When trying to build a career, you straightaway try to make sure everything is in sync for you to do well. Sometimes you have to make your own decisions and because he had played for so long, the expectations and consistency made a lot of sense. From then on, I followed what I wanted to do."

leading run-scorer for India and the second-leading run-getter behind Steve Smith with 692 runs in four games.

While it can be argued that a champion player like Virat Kohli would have ultimately come out of a lean phase like that, whether the turnaround would have been as swift as it eventually panned out can't be ascertained.



Money can buy you a fine dog, but only love can make him wag his tail.

HEALTH

Menstrual Hygiene : Is society's silence on menstruation aggravating mental health issues?

It's high time period education be placed at forefront to promote gender equality and empower next generation of women.

My first period story

The bell rang, marking yet another clumsy day at school. It was the first period — Mathematics, which was my least favourite subject. It was a headache to memorise all the trigonometry values. But this time, I actually had a bad headache and a stomach ache too, for reasons unknown to me.

My friends tried to comfort me, but to no avail. In the middle of the class, my stomach ached. As I stood up, my friend from the back row held my shoulders and made me sit down. I asked her what the matter was and she responded that I had red stains on my skirt. I then realised that I had my first period.

The problem was how to leave the lesson discreetly, as there were many boys around me. The boys did not understand and would often make fun of such situations and I certainly did not want to embarrass myself. So, I told my friend to act as my shield from behind while I asked the teacher for permission to leave.

My friend held a textbook behind my skirt while I asked for permission to go to the washroom. She acted as my shield the entire time as we went to the medical room and fetched a sanitary napkin. But when we returned to class, I realised that a few boys had seen the stains and started to tease me and say hurtful things.

Looking back at this vivid memory, I wish I could have been bolder and less frightened to deal with the situation. If I had been calm about it, I would not have felt embarrassed at all.

This experience, though personal, reflects a larger societal issue. Menstruation is a natural biological process, yet it is shrouded in stigma and embarrassment. Societal attitudes towards menstruation can have profound effects on the mental health of adolescent girls.

The fear of being teased or embarrassed can lead to anxiety, shame and a lack of self-esteem. This is not just an isolated

incident but a widespread issue that affects many girls during a vulnerable stage of their development.

Years later, when I worked in the field of menstrual hygiene, I encountered an adolescent girl who candidly asked me, "Why can't I pray when I menstruate?" To this, I replied, "Who says you cannot pray?" She responded, "My mother says that I cannot pray."

This interaction highlighted the deep-rooted societal stigma attached to menstruation. Such beliefs are often passed down

these topics are engulfed in taboos, leading to adverse health outcomes for young girls. Furthermore, the research highlighted that this silence on menstruation underpins broader gender inequalities, rendering menstruation a non-issue and hindering women and girls from reaching their full potential.

UNICEF reports that 71 per cent of adolescent girls in India remain unaware of menstruation until they get their first period. This lack of awareness contributes to the perpetuation of myths and taboos surrounding menstruation. The stigma and

illness, exemplifying how deeply ingrained beliefs can contribute to mental health issues. The stigma attributed to 'purity and pollution' deeply impacts women's rights and freedom, highlighting the need for societal shifts in perception and dialogue.

Moreover, studies have also considered the impact of menstruation stigma on men, showing significant gaps in their knowledge and acceptance, which underscores the need for education across genders to reduce menstrual stigma and policy resistance.

knowledge and skills to girls, enabling them to manage their hygiene independently.

Furthermore, studies emphasise the importance of incorporating menstrual hygiene education into the school curriculum and health institutes to ensure that young women have access to accurate information and resources. Educational interventions have been shown to bring about positive changes in less discussed topics like menstruation among adolescent girls.

Need to teach them early

The need for comprehensive menstrual education is clear. Such education should begin early and be integrated into school curricula. It should involve both boys and girls to promote a supportive environment. Additionally, community-based programmes can help educate parents and caregivers, who play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards menstruation.

Addressing the stigmas surrounding menstruation is not just about improving menstrual hygiene; it's about improving the

overall mental health and well-being of adolescent girls. By breaking the silence and providing accurate information, we can create a more supportive and understanding environment. It's high time that period education be placed at the forefront of our efforts to promote gender equality and empower the next generation of women.

The provision of menstrual hygiene education in India is vital to address the lack of knowledge, promote proper hygiene practices, prevent health issues and empower girls to manage their menstrual health effectively.

By implementing educational programmes, raising awareness and integrating menstrual hygiene education into the school curriculum, India can work towards ensuring that all girls have the necessary information and resources to maintain good menstrual hygiene practices.



through generations, reinforcing the cycle of shame and misinformation.

While there are signs of change, more needs to be done. Educating both girls and boys about menstruation is essential in breaking down these stigmas. This education should not only focus on the biological aspects but also address the cultural and social dimensions, helping to normalise menstruation as a natural part of life.

The need for menstrual education Research consistently indicates that society's silence on menstruation plays a significant role in exacerbating mental health issues. Studies from various parts of the world, including countries like India, have highlighted the adverse effects of taboos and secrecy surrounding menstruation on women's and girls' health.

For instance, a sociological study emphasised how this silence aggravates mental health issues, particularly in cultures where

secrecy are not only prevalent in India but also in other developing countries, where cultural taboos lead to misconceptions and negative perceptions about menstruation.

This widespread stigma is depicted as a social dilemma, challenging both the psychological well-being and social lives of women. Public discussions on social platforms like Twitter have been identified as potential means to undermine these stigmas, suggesting the importance of promoting open dialogues about menstruation.

Despite certain policies acknowledging menstrual stigma, challenges persist in effectively dismantling it, indicating missed opportunities for comprehensive action towards menstrual literacy and the elimination of stigma.

Even in cultural contexts, such as those explored from an Indian male's perspective, societal silence on menstruation is connected with misconceptions that link menstruation to mental

Menstruation is a natural process and it should be treated as such. By changing our attitudes and providing proper education, we can help girls navigate this important stage of life with confidence and dignity.

Studies have shown that girls in India often lack knowledge about menstruation before experiencing it, leading to feelings of fear, disgust and uncertainty. Lack of proper menstrual hygiene education can result in challenges related to menstruation affecting girls' schooling. Additionally, poor menstrual hygiene is linked to significant health issues, such as reproductive tract infections and cervical cancer.

Therefore, there is a need for targeted interventions to raise awareness among schoolgirls, especially in rural areas, to improve their knowledge and practices of menstrual hygiene management.

Research indicates that early education on menstrual hygiene is essential to impart adequate

SPECIAL STORIES

Record Retail Inflation

Odisha has become the number one state in the country in terms of rising prices of various commodities. The State has consistently recorded retail inflation rate of over seven per cent for the last six months. As per reports, it is the highest rate of inflation in the country for six successive months.

As per the recently published Retail Inflation Report by the Union government, the retail inflation rate has logged 7.1 per cent in Odisha in April, which is the highest in the country.

While the average inflation rate in the country for the month of April has receded to 4.8 per cent which is the lowest in the last 11 months, the graph is

continuously showing an upward curve in Odisha. Delhi recorded the lowest rate of 2.2 per cent inflation in April. While the retail inflation rate was 7.7 per cent in Odisha in November 2023, it was at its peak at 8.7 per cent in December.

Meanwhile, the experts have attributed the reason behind the high inflation rate to many factors.

“Variation in prices of some specific commodities and supply bottlenecks are the main reasons



vegetables and other essential commodities have skyrocketed in market as Odisha is no more a producing State and it is dependent on other states,” said a market expert.

“The tight demand and supply situation in certain categories of essential commodities and the production outcomes of key vegetables have pushed the retail inflation to a higher rate. Above normal temperatures and the prevailing heat wave conditions have also pushed up the overall inflation,” he added.



Odisha girl raises voice at UN on paid leave during Periods

Though creating awareness among women about their monthly cycle is still considered a taboo subject in many parts of the country, an Odia girl has gone a step forward by raising her voice about paid leave during periods at the Civil Society Conference 2024 of the United Nations.

Odisha's Ranjeeta Priyadarshini grabbed attention across the globe by raising the important stigma-attached issue while representing in the prestigious conference held in Nairobi from May 9-10.

Ranjeeta reportedly got an overwhelming response from all the delegates about the issue –

'Paid Period Leave' that she raised in the special forum.

“I am working for 'Paid Period Leave' for all women employees. I request everyone here to support 'Paid Period Leave' for women employees. If 'period leave' is implemented, women employees will get support during their menstruation while on duty. It's a request that if you support the issue, it will help many women employees all over the world,” said Ranjeeta at the Civil Society Conference amid huge applause from delegates across the globe.

“One of the most underreported reasons is discomfort from being on the ground while

menstruating. I have encountered in numerous cases where women workers suffered during their periods while at work due to lack of access to proper toilets, restrooms and many more,” said Ranjeeta.

Earlier, Ranjeeta had launched an online campaign urging the Union Labour Ministry to implement paid monthly period leave for all women workers in India.

“According to Article 15 (3) and Article 42 of the Constitution, the state shall create special provisions for women providing just and humane conditions for work. There should be no shame

or stigma attached to requesting a period leave. A monthly menstrual cycle paid leave, if passed, will provide a healthier working environment for all workers who menstruate. I demand respect for me and all women workers because we are the backbone of our economy,” said Ranjeeta



Ranjeeta Priyadarshini at Civil Society Conference 2024 of the United Nations

Granted regularization date is decided by employer: Orissa High Court

The Orissa High Court has ruled that the date from which regularization is to be granted to an employee is a matter to be decided by the employer keeping in view several factors.

As per a report in Live Law, the bench of Justice Sashikanta Mishra held that it depends on the nature of the work, the number of posts lying vacant, the financial condition of the employer, the additional financial burden caused, the suitability of the workmen for the job, the manner and reason for which the initial appointments were made.

The hearing has been made pertaining to the employment status of a petitioner, who was appointed as a science teacher (CBZ) on a contractual basis at the Subarnarekha Irrigation Project Composite High School which is managed by the Water Resources Department. The school was set up to educate the children of project employees. It was recognized by the Education Department and the Board of Secondary Education.

The petitioner was initially appointed on a contractual basis on July 29, 1995. He continued in the position despite efforts for regular recruitment. Subsequently, he sought regularization of his service and benefits equivalent to a regular Trained Graduate Teacher. Despite initial reluctance by the Odisha Administrative Tribunal to issue directives for regularization due to the school's potential closure, a



subsequent court judgment directed authorities to consider regularization, considering the petitioner's ten-plus years of service.

Consequently, the department granted the petitioner the regular pay scale from August 2, 2005, modified to January 31, 2002. The Petitioner approached the Orissa High Court. He demanded regularization from the date of his initial appointment, July 29, 1995, arguing that the posts were duly sanctioned, and his appointment on a contractual basis was illegal.

Observation by Orissa High Court

The High Court observed that the engagement of the petitioner as a science teacher was on a contractual basis without undergoing any formal selection process. It also observed that the petitioner's appointment did not follow a proper recruitment procedure, and there was no evidence to suggest that the petitioner was selected through a formal process. Despite a subsequent request by the department to the Collector to sponsor suitable candidates selected by the selection committee for the vacant posts, the petitioner's engagement on contractual terms lacked procedural regularity.

The Court held that adherence to due recruitment processes is a fundamental aspect of lawful appointments. It states unequivocally that the law does not sanction the direct appointment of individuals to sanctioned posts without undergoing appropriate recruitment procedures. Though the petitioner's appointment initially lacked legal compliance, the Court acknowledged that the authorities, in compliance with a previous court directive, have since regularized the petitioner's services, effective from the date of the Tribunal's order.

NEWS & VIEWS

Why did 2024 Lok Sabha predictions miss the mark? Here's the science behind exit polls

Experts say limitation of sampling methodology, reworking of uniform swing regions and structural issues could be behind polling industry mistakes

On June 4, many people took to X (formerly Twitter) to slam the exit poll predictions after counting began for the 2024 India Lok Sabha elections.

Chetan Bhagat, author and columnist, for example, wrote: "Either exit polls lied. Or interviewed voters lied to the exit polls. Or exit polls used flawed methodologies..." Sumanth Raman, sports commentator, said: "Those who did the exit polls must be held accountable. No way they could have missed the trends if they did the poll genuinely."

Pollsters like India Today-Axis My India, Chanakya and ABP-CVoter, to name a few, predicted that National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would get 350-400 seats. Other pollsters estimated that the alliance would get over 350 seats.

But, on election day, the alliance managed to win only 293 seats, according to newspaper Indian Express, with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) bagging 240. The exit polls had grossly overestimated NDA's numbers, predicting a landslide victory.

This is not the first time that exit polls have got it wrong. In 2014 and 2016, exit polls underestimated NDA's numbers. In 2014, the alliance won 336 seats, while the former United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by Indian National Congress secured just 59 seats, with the rest 149 going to others.

"Almost all polls, including the exit polls, grossly underestimated the strength of NDA and overestimated the strength of the UPA, even though they did predict the victory of NDA," read a 2021 preprint paper.

In 2019, the story was the same. Only two pollsters — India Today-Axis My India and News 24-Today's Chanakya — got the numbers right.

What are exit polls?

Exit polls are surveys conducted

immediately after voters leave the polling stations. Pollsters use probability and statistics to forecast election results.

In 1936, Gallup, an American multinational analytics and advisory company, accurately predicted Franklin D Roosevelt's victory over Alf Landon in the United States presidential election. The company based its

during elections to gauge the mood of Indian voters. Thanks to the proliferation of electronic media in the 1990s, election surveys and exit polls grew popular in India.

Pre-election surveys and exit polls have become a regular feature in the last one and half decades, political analyst Praveen Rai from research

sample size should be large enough and representative of the population.

Some people might not want to record their responses. To avoid this, Karandikar said he would give his respondents a paper to mark their vote anonymously and request them to put it in a box. Another approach that some pollsters take is to ask

each other out, or at least the average is likely to be closer to the truth," he noted.

Pollsters may have mixed and matched the data with expert opinion, Karandikar suspected. There is no way to know for sure as pollsters are not required to publish their methodology.

Sharma said he believed the Centre for the Study of

Developing Societies and the private player My Axis My India were being fairly honest with their methodology, even though they got it drastically wrong.

However, the industry of pollsters has gotten crowded and there is no quality control, he pointed out. "Very few people bother to ask these pollsters to be honest and upfront about the methodology," he noted.

Verma said pollsters overestimated BJP's seats in Uttar Pradesh, with Axis My India especially overestimating Maharashtra. Axis and CVoter overestimated BJP doing exceptionally well in West Bengal.

"With the same methodology, they [Axis and CVoter] have also been getting it right. They also predicted many elections in the last five years with the same methodology and they have also made

mistakes, which is part of the process," Verma explained.

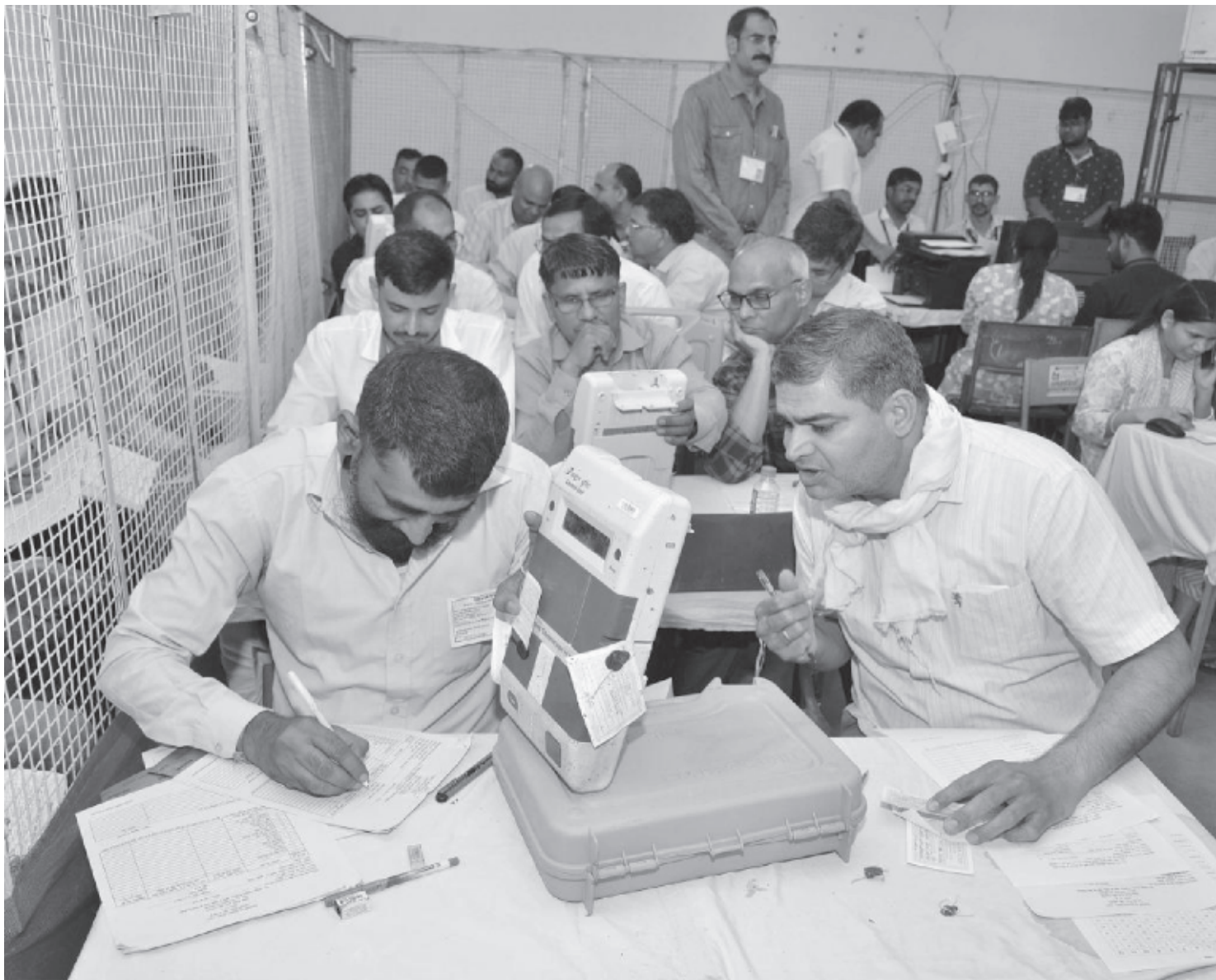
Axis My India, for instance, claims an accuracy rate of roughly 95 per cent spread across 47 assembly elections, including 2 general elections.

They may have underestimated women samples in Bengal, who may have voted heavily in favour of Mamata Banerjee-led All India Trinamool Congress, he added.

Sharma also suspected the 2024 elections saw the reworking of uniform swing regions.

"If the trend in a certain sample of seats in a province is in a certain direction, you can be fairly confident that there will be a uniform swing in that regional cluster," he highlighted.

Based on their analysis of previous verdicts, Sharma adds, psephologists — people who study elections — work with the assumption of certain regions being uniform clusters.



prediction on the scientific sampling of a few thousand people.

"While this science has been around for a long time, the polling industry in India took off from the late 80s onwards, after a gap of close to 40 years," Amogh Dhar Sharma, departmental lecturer at the Oxford Department of International Development.

This, according to Sharma, is crucial because, in the 80s, Indian elections became far more unpredictable. This period also witnessed a rise in the regionalisation of Indian politics.

"Though Congress won a historic mandate in 1984, it was reversed in the 1989 elections. I think this is why polls became so popular in Indian politics from the 1980s onwards. The Indian voter suddenly became a bit of a mystery for the political class," he added.

In the 1980s, journalist Prannoy Roy conducted opinion polls

institute Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, wrote in the journal Economic & Political Weekly.

Exit polls could explain voter behaviour and early projections of election outcomes. According to Sharma, exit polls can tell you how people voted in terms of the demographic breakdown of the different socioeconomic groups.

However, the importance of exit polls is minimal. It is just for public consumption and media. It has no other impact, Rajeeva Karandikar, professor emeritus at the Chennai Mathematical Institute said.

How is it calculated?

Polling agencies conduct large sample surveys, interviewing people on the party they voted for. Rahul Verma, a fellow at think tank Centre for Policy Research and visiting assistant professor at Ashoka University, explained that surveys should randomly choose people to answer these questions. The

respondents a series of questions without directly asking who they voted for. Based on the responses, the polling team deduces the party that an individual voted for.

Pollsters also perform modelling to predict voter behaviour. This has to be state-wise. "We see that each state is quite different from the neighbour. Even among socioeconomically similar districts, people can act differently because of the political history of those states," he said.

What could have gone wrong this time?

Karandikar speculated that a limitation of the sampling methodology that was followed for the exit polls could be to blame.

"For example, if all 10 pollsters follow reasonable methodology for sampling and analysis, they can be off the mark but unlikely to arrive at similar numbers — the errors are likely to cancel

MISCELLANEOUS

Most Interesting Facts about Books

As we walk outside and feel the familiar patter of raindrops on our skin, we likely don't give much thought to the fascinating properties of rain. However, rain is a remarkable part of our natural world that holds many secrets. The rain that falls from the sky and sustains all life on earth is the result of an incredible journey. Rain undergoes a series of changes and follows certain patterns from its initial formation high up in the clouds to its descent towards the ground, which aren't obvious when you're caught without an umbrella. The next time rain surprises us with its arrival, surprise ourselves with these facts about the mysterious phenomenon of rain. A deeper understanding of rain will give us a profound appreciation for this life-giving force of nature.

Raindrops are not actually teardrop-shaped

As surprising as it may seem, raindrops are not actually teardrop-shaped. While falling through the air, raindrops flatten into oblate spheroids due to air resistance. They only appear rounded when viewed from the side. The size of raindrops varies depending on several factors, including humidity, temperature, and updraft speeds. On average, raindrops measure 1 to 6 millimeters in diameter. However, some raindrops can reach up to 8 millimeters, almost the size of a small marble. The larger the raindrop, the faster it falls due to increased mass. At their terminal velocity, even the largest raindrops do not drop fast enough to cause damage.

The number of raindrops that fall in a single storm is staggering. A one-inch rainstorm deposits around 6 million gallons of water over an acre of land. Since the average raindrop has a volume of 0.05 milliliters, that amounts to 120 billion raindrops in a single acre. While rain may seem commonplace, its role in the water cycle and climate is crucial. Rain transports water through evaporation and condensation, sustaining life as we know it. The water in raindrops recycles endlessly between the land, oceans, atmosphere, and all living things. Though simple in form, rain contains hidden depths of complexity that continue to



surprise and inspire wonder in those who study the workings of our planet. The rain gives life; we should appreciate each drop.

Rain has a unique smell

A rain has a distinctive scent that derives from a variety of sources. As rain falls through the atmosphere, it absorbs chemicals and gasses along the way, including petrichor – an oil produced by plants that gives rain a fresh, earthy smell. The petrichor fragrance oil comes from a variety of plants and builds up on rocks, soil, and other surfaces during dry weather. When rain falls, the oil is released into the air, producing the familiar rain-soaked aroma. The oil contains organic compounds like goemin that provide an earthy, musky odor. The longer the dry period before rain, the more petrichor oil builds up, resulting in a stronger scent during the next rainfall. Other factors influence the smell of rain. Bacteria in the soil and on plants also release odoriferous gasses as rain falls and humidity rises. Pollutants in the air may dissolve into raindrops, altering the aroma. The smell of ozone at the start of a storm comes from the reaction of oxygen and sunlight. As the rain washes the environment, it picks up the scents of leaves, grass, and other foliage. The medley of smells during a rainstorm arises from nature's chemical reactions and Earth's biological processes at work. While rain restores life to the land, its aromatic qualities revive our senses and lift our moods. The familiar smell of rain connects us to cherished memories and a feeling of

renewal.

Rainforests don't get all that much rain

Rainforests are typically thought of as wet, lush environments, but they actually receive less rainfall than you might expect. The dense

BOOKS FACTS

- The most expensive book in the world is the Codex Leicester.
- The oldest book is the Voynich Manuscript.
- The largest book is the Guinness World Record.
- The smallest book is the Microbook.
- The thickest book is the Guinness Book of Records.
- The longest sentence is in Les Misérables.
- The best-selling book is the Holy Bible.
- The most-read book is the Bible.
- The most-loved book is the Bible.
- The most-read author is Shakespeare.
- The most-read genre is fiction.
- The most-read language is English.
- The most-read country is the United States.
- The most-read age group is 18-24.
- The most-read time of day is in the evening.
- The most-read device is a smartphone.
- The most-read format is e-books.
- The most-read publisher is Penguin.
- The most-read distributor is Amazon.
- The most-read retailer is Barnes & Noble.
- The most-read library is the British Library.
- The most-read archive is the Internet Archive.
- The most-read database is Project Gutenberg.
- The most-read website is Goodreads.
- The most-read app is Kindle.
- The most-read platform is Audible.
- The most-read service is Spotify.
- The most-read network is Facebook.
- The most-read community is Reddit.
- The most-read forum is Quora.
- The most-read blog is Medium.
- The most-read podcast is Spotify.
- The most-read video is YouTube.
- The most-read game is Steam.
- The most-read app is the App Store.
- The most-read device is the iPhone.
- The most-read operating system is iOS.
- The most-read browser is Safari.
- The most-read search engine is Google.
- The most-read social media platform is Facebook.
- The most-read messaging app is WhatsApp.
- The most-read email client is Gmail.
- The most-read calendar is Google Calendar.
- The most-read notes app is Evernote.
- The most-read productivity app is Trello.
- The most-read project management tool is Asana.
- The most-read time management app is Forest.
- The most-read habit tracker is Habitica.
- The most-read journaling app is Day One.
- The most-read reading app is Kindle.
- The most-read audiobook app is Audible.
- The most-read podcast app is Spotify.
- The most-read video app is YouTube.
- The most-read game app is Steam.
- The most-read app store is the App Store.
- The most-read device is the iPhone.
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- The most-read game app is Steam.
- The most-read app store is the App Store.

canopy of rainforest trees blocks much of the precipitation from reaching the ground. Studies show rainforests receive between 60 to 180 inches of rain per year. While significant, this is less than some temperate forests. The rain that does make it to the rainforest floor tends to fall during short, intense downpours. These deluges, combined with the thick canopy blocking sunlight, prevent much undergrowth on the rainforest floor. The sparse understory and limited sunlight at ground level are why rainforests often appear open and spacious when walking through them. The rainfall pattern also impacts the wildlife. Many rainforest animals have adapted to the heavy downpours and sparse undergrowth. Birds and monkeys traverse the upper canopy, while creatures like jaguars and anacondas prowl the dim forest floor. Amphibians emerge during rains to breed, and insects are most active, providing food for many rainforest animals.

Continued Page 5

Surprising Facts about Rain

Reading a book transports us to another secret world of your own. A good book offers more than just a temporary escape from real life, it brings big wonders to your life. Let's find out some captivating facts about books.

Most expensive book in the world

The most expensive book, or notebook, in the world is Codex Leicester by Leonardo Da Vinci. Even more, it was Bill Gates who purchased it at 30.8 million dollars for the reason that it's one of his greatest sources of inspiration.

One of the biggest books

The Klencke Atlas is one of the largest books on Earth. Moreover, The Klencke Atlas is a unique work without other copies, the book measures 1.75 meters tall, and 1.90 meters wide when it is open. Consequently, it is so heavy that almost six to seven people need to carry the book.



Largest book in the world

The largest book in the world according to the Guinness World Record is 5 meters x 8.06 meters (16.40 ft x 26.44 ft) and weighs about 1500 kg (3,306 lb) with 429 pages. Furthermore, the book was unveiled on February 27, 2012, by Mshahed International Group in Dubai, UAE with over 50 people who participated in the construction and it was entitled 'This the Prophet Mohamed'. And finally, the main objective of the book is to provide a compilation of stories highlighting the lifetime achievements of Islam's Prophet.

World's longest audio book

The world's longest audiobook is the "50 Lectures" by Takaaki Yoshimoto (Japanese poet) which can play for about 5 days long. In conclusion, the audio book has Mr. Yoshimoto's lectures from the 1960s and '70s.

Thickest Published book

The thickest published book (Agatha Christie's Miss Marple stories) has a width of 12.67 inches and was released on May 20, 2009, by HarperCollins in London, United Kingdom. As a result, the Miss Marple Stories took 4,032 pages and weighs 8.04 kg. For that reason, the book was listed in the Guinness Book of Record with a collection of 20 short stories and 12 mystery novels.

Longest sentence ever

Victor Hugo wrote the longest sentence ever printed and most noteworthy, the novel Les Misérables has a total of 823 words in one sentence. Above all, Les Misérables became one of the greatest novels in the 19th century.

The best selling & most read book

The Holy Bible is still the best selling, most read book out there. Even more, it is because the Gideons International is giving free bibles around the world to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ about the salvation of each individual.

One of the first novels to be written on a Typewriter

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer was written in 1876 and was one of the first novels to be written on a typewriter. Mark Twain's Adventures of Tom Sawyer is about a young boy growing up along the Mississippi River. The story of this book is probably one of the best adventure stories for kids and teens up to this day.

People from Iceland read more than anyone else.

A study conducted at Bifröst University observed that 50% of Icelanders read more than 8 books a year and 93% read at least one.



Reading may relieve anxiety and stress by up to 68%. Reading may relieve anxiety and stress based on a study by the University of Sussex by up to 68%. Furthermore, reading can even relax your body by lowering your

heart rate and easing the tension in your muscles rather than just making a cup of tea or coffee during break time.

Hugh Beaver was the founder of Guinness Book of Records.

Hugh Beaver managed Guinness Breweries in the 1950s went to a shooting party in County Wexford, where he missed his shot at a golden plover. In contrast, he argued it was the fastest game bird in Europe but consequently couldn't find a reference book that proved it. That's why Hugh Beaver created the Guinness Book of Records.

Continued Page 02



NEWS & VIEWS

Verdict 2024: Odisha's women may have helped tilt scales in state against BJD, say experts

Women have long been a BJD vote bank; but excessive campaigning by BJP in addition to poll promises may have influenced female voters to go saffron

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which has ruled for 24 years in Odisha, has suffered a setback in both state assembly and Lok Sabha polls this time. A primary reason could be women voters voting against the party which

simultaneously in Odisha's 21 Lok Sabha and 147 assembly seats from May 13 to June 1.

According to the state electoral commissioner Nikunja Bihari Dhal, 73.37 per cent of the total voters who participated in the polling this election were male while 75.55 per cent were female.

Dhal said more than 25 million voters exercised their franchise

impressed women to vote saffron, said Jayant Kumar Mohapatra, former vice chancellor, Berhampur University.

He, however, said the BJP would face serious challenges in order to fulfill its promises, if it forms the government in the state.

Anti-incumbency factor and change of candidates are some other reasons for the regional

outfit getting a major jolt this time, said J K Barala, also the former vice chancellor of Berhampur University. Barala has edited a book titled Election Politics and voting behaviour in India, published in 1989. People wanted a change and voted BJP this time, he said.

While the BJP is not faring well at the Centre, Odisha may emerge as the sliver lining for the party. The leads suggest that not

only will the BJP emerge as the single largest party in the state in the Lok Sabha elections, but may also snatch power in the state from the BJD, he said.

“Kindly wait till the end of the counting in all seats,” said Tumba Nath Panda, a spokesperson of BJD. “We are going to form the government in the state for the first time,” said Bibhuti Jena, a senior leader of BJP.



has ruled the state for 24 years.

According to trends available till 4 PM on June 4, the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was leading in 19 of 21 Lok Sabha seats in the state, reducing the BJD to just one. The Congress was leading in Koraput, a seat in south Odisha. For the regional behemoth, this will be an astounding fall — it won 20 constituencies in 2014 and 12 in 2019.

The BJD has always considered the state's women voters as its vote bank. The regional outfit, led by Naveen Patnaik, has reason to believe so. The party has not only pleaded for 33 per cent reservation in the state assembly and Lok Sabha for women, but has also formed 7 million women self help groups (SHG) to empower half of the population. The party had also promised to provide pension to members of women SHGs if voted to power.

This Lok Sabha election had also had another factor seemingly going in the BJD's favour. More women exercised their franchise than their male counterparts in the four-phase elections held

in the four-phase elections. The voter turnout increased in the 2024 elections compared to 2019. “The total voter turnout, excluding postal ballots, was recorded at 74.44 per cent in 2024, against 73.09 per cent in 2019,” he said.

However, things have not gone according to plan for the BJD. As things stand at 4 PM, the BJP is leading in 80 seats of the state's 147, five more than the majority, and 57 higher than the figure it had managed to get to in 2019. The BJD is at 49, down from 113. The Congress is leading in 15. In 2019, Congress had won in 9 seats.

The women voters, on which Naveen Patnaik's party depends, might have tilted the scales, experts said.

Aggressive campaigning by BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi; assurance to provide financial assistance to women under Subhadra Yojana and more employment to their kids and to arrest agents/traffickers sending people through fraudulent means as migrants to other states to eke out their livelihoods, might have

From Page 17 (Why did 2024 Lok Sabha predictions miss the mark ?....)

“What we are seeing right now is a coming apart and a reshaping of what those clusters might look like. But we need to wait for the data,” he explained.

Then, there could have been issues with vote-to-seat conversion. To convert vote shares to seats, Karandikar uses the probabilistic count method.

“To put it very simply, let us say in one constituency, the gap between two leading candidates is 1 per cent. In the neighbouring constituency, the gap is 10 per cent. So we are far more sure about the person leading with a 10 per cent gap winning the seat than someone leading with a 1 per cent gap. This needs to be factored in when predicting the number of seats (for major parties) using the probabilistic count method,” he said.

Sharma also pointed to structural reasons. In Western democracies, such as the United Kingdom, there are silent conservative voters who refuse to declare their support despite voting for conservative parties. In India, people who are voting for or against the BJP for whatever reason tend to remain silent. Every exit poll should consider this, he said.

Another reason, he speculated, is concerned with the number of parties. They went wrong with states, where the effective number of parties was greater than two, like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra.

Do polling errors occur in other nations too?

The US has seen two most notable failures in the 1948 and 2016 presidential elections.

In 1948, the failure was clearly due to non-random sampling. In 2016, it was mainly due to a very high non-response percentage [where voters choose not to respond], and the resulting bias despite weighting adjustments.

Several state polls, especially in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, failed to observe the swing to 45th US President Donald Trump by many white blue-collar workers.

Pollsters in the UK got the Brexit referendum wrong. According to British daily The Guardian, fewer than a third (55) of the 168 polls conducted since the European Union referendum wording was decided last September predicted a leave vote.

“On average, the exit polls in the UK have been fairly accurate. This could be because of the average size of the constituency in the country, which is shockingly smaller than in India. This is why, I think the job of a pollster in the UK is also, in some ways, easier. One can make accurate predictions on a much smaller sample size,” Sharma noted.

Why Naveen Patnaik is No. 1 Chief Minister in India?

Pradeep Kumar Panda, Economist, Bhubaneswar

When Naveen Patnaik took over as Chief Minister in 2000, the state was going through a severe crisis after the 1999 Super Cyclone. The finances of the state were in a mess and there was no money to pay even salaries. The development activities had come to a complete halt. In those days, Odisha used to be in news for all the wrong reasons like hunger, poverty, disasters.

In the last two decades of Naveen Patnaik government in Odisha, the State has come out of the crisis situation and has been making rapid strides in development and emerged as a role model in many fields. It was not an easy journey. Naveen Patnaik had to overcome many challenges including a strong legacy of political corruption and administrative lethargy in the state. Large parts of the state face geographical and social-economic hurdles. But with a single-minded focus to fulfil the aspirations of the 4.5 crore people of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik government have been working with grit and determination. The people of Odisha appreciate good governance and reposed their faith in BJD party for five successive terms. When it comes to ambition

and performance, there's no stopping Naveen Patnaik, adjudged the 'Best Popular

INDIA TODAY poll by securing highest vote in popularity category way ahead

political observers thought was unthinkable year after year. After 22 years in power

mingling with the high and mighty, how did he come to be accepted and loved as one of Odisha's own?



Chief Minister' in the country as per several survey of

of other states counterparts. Naveen did what many

and being voted no. 1 is beyond expression of words.



It is the blessing of 4.5 crores Odia whose heartbeat for the man. Year after year, his popularity is on the rise.

In an era dominated by politicians of humble origins, he is something of an anomaly. Having spent most of his life outside Odisha,

Welfare motive is there in his genes being former Odisha chief minister Biju Patnaik's son. A legendary figure in Odisha, Biju Patnaik was an Air Force pilot and freedom fighter-turned-industrialist-turned-politician. In his four-decade-long career as a politician, he played a stellar role in developing a backward state like Odisha. He was elected chief minister twice. His death at 81 because of pneumonia left a vacuum in Odisha's heart and the state's politics as well. His colleagues in the Janata Dal knew the sentiment surrounding his name and sought out his younger son to fill the vacuum. He was not a natural at politics. Tall and suave, he was a regular in the party circuit in Delhi. Having studied first at the Doon School in Dehradun, and later at the St Stephen's College in Delhi, he once ran a boutique called 'Psychedelhi' on the premises of The Oberoi in Delhi, the clientele of which included the Beatles themselves. Clad in jeans and T-shirt, he was far removed from the masses he had to win over. The only thing going for him was his second name.