

## Odisha logs 70% turnout



**CIVIC DUTY:** People queuing up outside a polling station to exercise their democratic rights in Bhubaneswar

A BJP candidate smashing a voting machine, malfunctioning of EVMs, and three deaths inside booths marked the Phase III polls for six Lok Sabha and 42 Assembly seats in Odisha, Saturday.

Among the heavyweights whose fate was sealed included Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Lok Sabha MPs Aparajita Sarangi and Bhartruhari Mahtab

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 25:** Odisha recorded 70.23 per cent voter turnout till midnight (00.15 am) in the six Lok Sabha and 42 Assembly segments, the elections for which were held Saturday, officials said.

Voting was held in Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Puri Parliamentary constituencies along with 42 Assembly segments within the jurisdiction of these Lok Sabha seats.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik walked to the Aerodrome Upper Primary School near his residence here to cast his vote. "We will form a stable government in the state," he told reporters.

Chief Electoral Officer NB Dhal said voting was peaceful so far in the 10,581 polling stations, barring some

**61.46% polling in Phase VI**

**New Delhi:** An approximate voter turnout of 61.46 per cent was recorded in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections Saturday in 58 constituencies across six states and two Union Territories with the polling percentage in the Jangal Mahal region of West Bengal touching 79.78. Jharkhand recorded a turnout of 63.76 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 54.03 per cent, Bihar 55.24 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir 54.46 per cent, Haryana 61.16 per cent, Odisha 70.23 and Delhi 57.82 per cent, according to the figures released by the Election Commission (EC) as of 12.15 am. The EC said polling percentage in the Anantnag-Rajouri seat in Jammu and Kashmir is the highest in many decades.

torate exercised their franchise. The highest 73.81 per cent voting was recorded in Puri Lok Sabha seat, followed by Dhenkanal (73.69), Sambalpur (73.31), Keonjhar (71.93), Cuttack (67.36) and Bhubaneswar (62.00).

Among the 42 Assembly segments, Athamallik recorded the highest 85.42 per cent voter turnout while the lowest 51.00 per cent was registered at Bhubaneswar-North segment by 00.15 hrs, according to the app.

As many as 35,000 security personnel including 121 companies of central forces were deployed in different booths.

Chief Secretary PK Jena, DGP Arun Kumar Sarangi and many senior leaders including BJP national vice-president Bajjayant Panda also cast their votes in different booths of the Capital City.

**JAGDEV AT IT AGAIN**

**Bhubaneswar:** BJP's Khurda Assembly nominee Prasant Jagdev allegedly entered a polling booth and attacked the polling and presiding officers at booth no-114 at Kauripatna near Rajsunakhala under Begunia Assembly constituency. He also alleged to have broken the EVM machine inside the booth. This sparked tension in the area. Later, he fled the scene. On being informed, police chased him and brought him to the police station where he denied his involvement in the incident and staged a sit-in outside the police station.

**THREE DEATHS INSIDE BOOTHS**

**Bhubaneswar:** Bhubaneswar: Three persons died at separate places during the third phase of voting in the state, Saturday. In the first incident, an elderly woman, identified as Kumudini Dalei, 60, succumbed inside a polling booth at Patharapunj village under Baghuaipalli panchayat of Nayagarh district. Kumudini was waiting inside a booth to cast vote when she felt uncomfortable. She was rushed to a nearby hospital where doctors declared her dead. Similarly, a polling agent died inside booth no-136 at Bahalunda village under Nuabaga panchayat of Hindol Assembly constituency in Dhenkanal district. The deceased was identified as Sukadev Pattanayak. According to sources, Sukadev suddenly felt sick while on duty and became unconscious. He was taken to Hindol sub-divisional hospital where he died. In the third incident, Sujata Mitra, 51, a polling officer of booth no 114 in Hadibandhu School under Barabati-Cuttack Assembly segment, died while on duty. The cause of death was yet to be ascertained. The deceased was a teacher in a government primary school at Bakharabad in Cuttack.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

Please carry on! I'll look into it after a month or so. I am on a vacation now

**EC releases LS seat-wise data**

**Press Trust of India**

**New Delhi, May 25:** The Election Commission Saturday came out with Lok Sabha constituency-wise data on the number of votes cast in the first five phases of the elections and asserted that there is a pattern in creating false narratives and mischievous design to vitiate the electoral process. It said that any alteration in the number of votes polled is not possible.

The poll panel came out with the absolute number of voters on its own a day after the Supreme Court refused to issue directions to it on an NGO's plea for up-loading polling booth-wise voter turnout data

## 4 kids among 27 killed in Rajkot game zone fire

**Rajkot, May 25:** At least 27 persons, including four children under the age of 12, were killed in a massive fire that swept through a game zone teeming with people enjoying a summer vacation outing in this city of Gujarat Saturday evening, officials said.

The death toll is likely to go up, they added. Police have detained the owner of the TRP Game Zone and the manager while the state government assigned the probe to a Special

Investigation Team. Relief and rescue operations have been underway at the affected game zone for more than six hours after the blaze erupted at a structure built using metal and fibre sheets for gaming activities at around 4:30 pm, officials said, adding that the structure collapsed due to the huge fire.

"So far we have confirmed the death of 27 persons in the fire incident. The bodies are charred beyond recognition and hence their identification is difficult," said ACP Radhika Bharai.

According to eyewitnesses, several people, including children were playing games at the game zone, located on Nana-Mava Road, when the tragedy struck. However, the exact cause of the massive fire is not known.

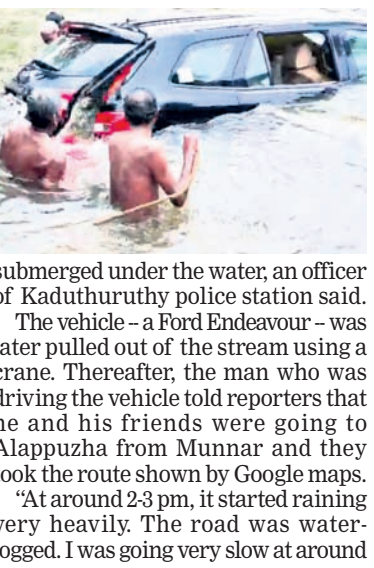
President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident. Modi spoke to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel to enquire about the rescue and relief efforts. The CM has announced an ex gratia of ₹4 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased and ₹50,000 to each injured.

## Google Maps leads tourists into swollen stream

**Kottayam, May 25:** Using Google Maps to navigate resulted in a tourist group from Hyderabad driving into a stream swollen with water near Kuruppanthara in this south Kerala district, police said Saturday.

The incident occurred late Friday night when the four-member group, including a woman, were going towards Alappuzha. The road they were travelling on was covered by water overflowing from the stream due to heavy rains and since the tourists were unfamiliar with the area, they drove right into the water body while navigating using Google maps, police said.

All four managed to escape unharmed due to the efforts of a nearby police patrolling unit and local residents, but their vehicle was completely



submerged under the water, an officer of Kaduthuruthy police station said.

The vehicle - a Ford Endeavour - was later pulled out of the stream using a crane. Thereafter, the man who was driving the vehicle told reporters that he and his friends were going to Alappuzha from Munnar and they took the route shown by Google maps.

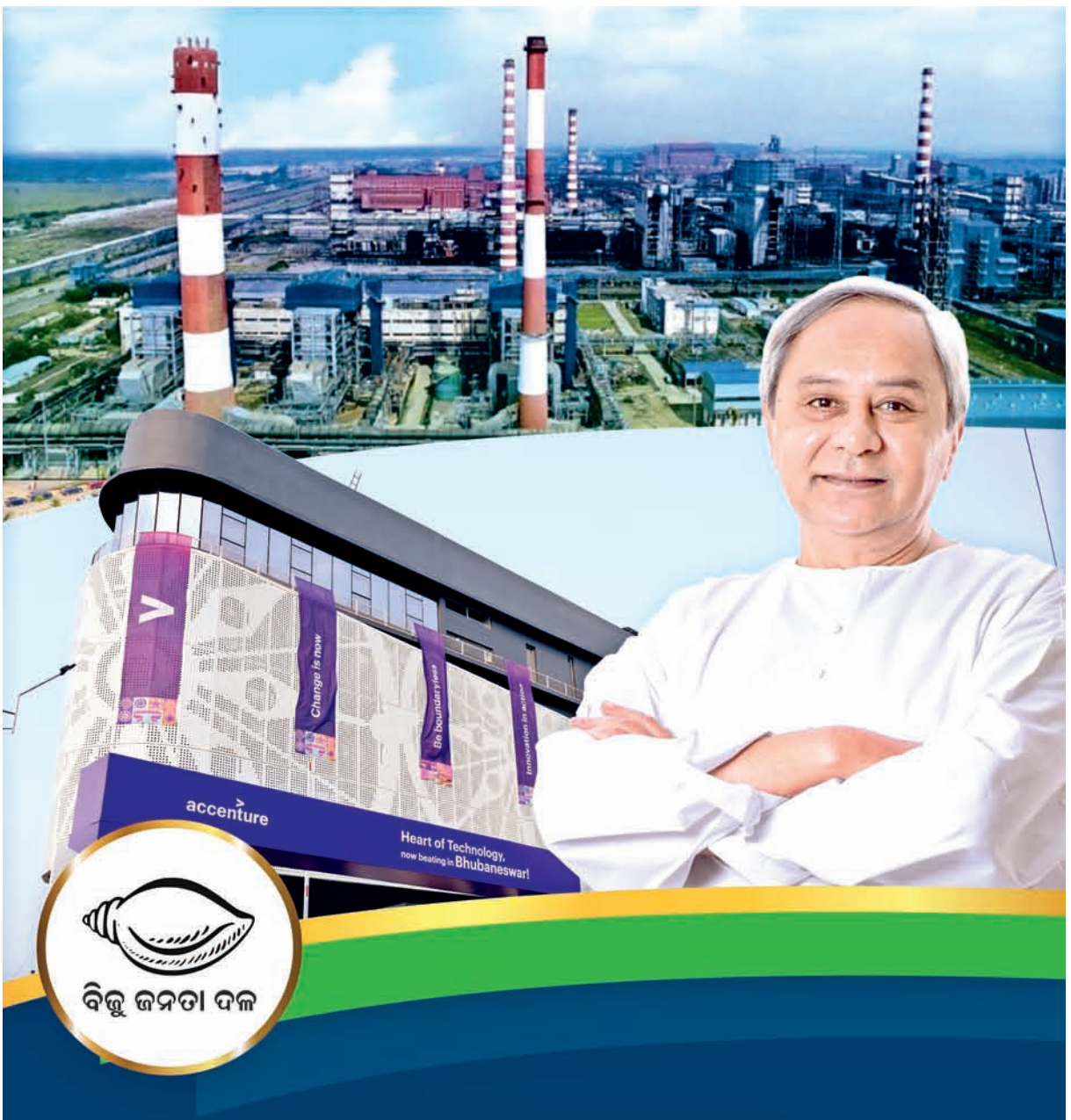
"At around 2-3 pm, it started raining very heavily. The road was waterlogged. I was going very slow at around 10 kms per hour. But, suddenly the front tyres went deep into the water and the vehicle lost control.

"Then the rear tyres also went in and the vehicle started floating forward. We quickly pulled down the windows and jumped out. We somehow managed to safely reach the shore," he said.

Meanwhile, residents of the area said such accidents happen there during the rainy season when the road gets submerged.

This is not the first such Google map-related accident reported in Kerala.

In October last year, two young doctors died in a car accident which occurred after they allegedly followed directions on Google Maps and fell into a river. Following the incident, the Kerala police had issued cautionary guidelines for using the technology during the monsoon season.



### NAVEEN GUARANTEE

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### VOTE FOR SANKHA TWICE

ONE VOTE FOR MP ONE VOTE FOR MLA

Published by Dr Sasmit Patra, General Secretary, Biju Janata Dal

# leisure



**NORTH TO SING AT LION KING CONCERT**  
Rapper Kanye West and reality TV star Kim Kardashian's daughter, North West, is all set to make her singing debut at the Hollywood Bowl during the first of the two-night *The Lion King* concert event. North will perform *I Just Can't Wait to Be King*.

**JLO WAS HELPED BY AFFLECK ON ATLAS SET**  
Actor Ben Affleck helped his wife Jennifer Lopez navigate certain scenes for the film *Atlas*, according to the actress' co-star Sterling K. Brown. In an interview, Brown said, "Every once in a while, Ben would read the lines for Smith. And the newlyweds were still very much in love; I think she just wanted to hear his voice."



**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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**ARIES**  
Decisions about career and finance will keep you preoccupied today. After a hectic day, all you may want to do is relax. In that case, Ganesh may send a short but pleasurable trip your way, which is sure to rejuvenate you. Group activity suggests you will make more friends, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
You must learn to get to the root of a routine to keep things fresh today, feels Ganesh. Just learn the basic psychology of people and analyse the facts. All action and decision has a motive, you will need to understand the chain to get the most out of things, advises Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
It's time you took stock of your personal life. Is there someone you want to propose but are afraid to do so? Ganesh advises you not to let the fear of rejection stop you from making an effort. There are strong indications that you will be accepted if you speak your heart today. So let him/her know how you feel.

**CANCER**  
Ganesh believes that you are likely to have a heightened interest in the study of philosophy and the working of the metaphysical world. This may be mere curiosity or a part of your effort to improve your professional skills.

**LEO**  
It's fun, fun and more fun on the horizon! Ganesh foresees you taking time out for some leisure and frolic today. Broaden your horizon with a bit of travel since you are very likely to be going on a small trip to recharge your batteries. When it comes to work - which you seem to have put on hold - it is a matter of pride for you to play the role that you essay within your company.

**VIRGO**  
Today you need to carry on with your success without resting on your past laurels. You will also need to stay focused and organised to continue with the same success level that you enjoyed in the past. Pay attention to your relationship matters as they are the quintessential of your success and peace of mind.

**LIBRA**  
It is very likely that you will arouse immense jealousy in others with your success and growth in business. Your business rivals may attempt to dent your credit worthiness in one way or the other. You may prefer to deal with them subtly rather than confront them openly, feels Ganesh.

**SCORPIO**  
You may find yourself at crossroads, wondering which path to take. Crucial decisions regarding your personal life may numb your thoughts. Let this not interfere with your routine or it may lead to complications at work and with loved ones.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You seem to be on a self-appreciation mode today. Grooming, makeover and attracting attention in on your cards today, you make extra efforts to get that glamorous look for your self. And as Ganesh says, it will surely not go unnoticed as you bag a lot of compliments for it.

**CAPRICORN**  
You regret spending hefty amount of money on branded items and luxuries, but you'll see a ray of hope today, feels Ganesh. Your bank account is strengthened by some heavy cash flow, and needless to say, it will give you a great relief. Now, you'll understand the value of money and curb on your urge to spend lavishly.

**AQUARIUS**  
Today is your day! Your performance will speak for itself and everyone at work, including bosses, will appreciate your efforts, says Ganesh. Work will not seem burdensome any more, in fact you will enjoy your job like never before.

**PISCES**  
You are likely to feel a lot of tension and stress today. You will feel down owing to some disagreement with someone or due to some unfathomable reason. Even that special someone will be unable to chase away your blues. A little meditation will help you to bounce back and get into your daily routine, says Ganesh.

## 'OTT helped me break barriers'

**Mumbai:** Actress Prachi Desai, known for roles in *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai*, *Rock On 2*, and *Azhar*, shared why she did not get meaty offers after a few film offers after *Rock On*.

In an interview, she said, "During and after the pandemic, OTT changed everything for writers, directors, newcomers, and even for actors like Manoj Bajpayee and Vijay Varma, who were known names, but their potential wasn't fully tapped. In my case, I could have never imagined playing an undercover cop in a typical Bollywood film, but web films like *Silence 1* and *Silence 2* gave me the opportunity to break barriers and do something different. OTT was a breather for actors who had to wait endlessly for films to be financed and eventually released in theatres."

She added, "I was only 17 when I started doing *Kasamh Se* and was shooting six episodes a week. My world changed overnight when I won *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*. And at 19, I was suddenly the lead actress in *Rock On*. It was an incredible opportunity, but after *Rock On*, nobody remembered that I was a 19-year-old, and I think I got slotted in the older woman category."

The *Bol Bachchan* actress concluded, "Coming from a humble background with teacher parents, I lacked industry connections and guidance, leading to type-casting and project selection errors. To establish myself in Mumbai, I accepted the available roles. Despite my mistakes, I'm grateful for my journey. OTT films like *Silence* now challenge the notion of limited shelf life for actresses."

AGENCIES



## Top acting honour for Anasuya at Cannes

**Cannes:** Actress Anasuya Sengupta became the first Indian to win a top acting award at the Cannes Film Festival and took home the Best Actress award at the Uncertain Regard segment of the festival. Sengupta won the award for her gritty role in Bulgarian director Constantin Bojanov's film, *The Shameless*, which also features well-known actress Mita Vashist on its star cast.

Anasuya plays Renuka, a vagabond seeking refuge in a northern Indian community of sex workers after fleeing from Delhi after being charged with murder. The film's story centres around Renuka's illicit love affair with a teenager named Devika, played by Omara Shetty, who's initially sheltered from entering sex work because of her physical ailments, but not for long.

Receiving the award, a shaking Anasuya dedicated it to the queer community and other marginalised communities for so bravely fighting a fight they really shouldn't have to.

Her voice shaking with emotion and drawing repeated cheers and applause, she ended her short acceptance speech by saying, "We don't need to be colonised to know how very, very pathetic colonisers are."

## BIDYAKANAK'S 6TH NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL - DAY II



Artistes enacting a scene from the Hindi play *Agni aur Barkha* on the second evening of the festival at Rabindra Mandap, Saturday. The play, written by Girish Karnad and directed by Swati Dubey, was performed by Samagam Rangmandal of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

## CANNES 2024

# All We Imagine as Light wins Grand Prix award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cannes, May 25:** Filmmaker Payal Kapadia Saturday scripted history as her spellbinding drama *All We Imagine as Light* won the Grand Prix award at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival.

The film bagged the award, which is the second-most prestigious prize of the festival after the Palme d'Or, during the closing ceremony of the 77th edition. Kapadia's feature directorial debut, which screened Thursday night and has received glowing reviews in the international press, already registered its name in the history books after it became the first Indian film in 30 years and first ever by an Indian female director to be showcased in the main competition.

The screening of the film received an eight-minute standing ovation from the audience members.

*All We Imagine as Light*, a Malayalam-Hindi feature, is about Prabha, a nurse, who receives an unexpected gift from her long estranged husband that throws her life into disarray. Her younger roommate, Anu, tries in vain to find a private spot in the big city to be alone with her boyfriend.

One day the two nurses go on a road trip to a beach town where the mystical forest becomes a space for their dreams to manifest, according to the plotline.

An alumna of the Film and Television

Institute of India (FTII), Kapadia is best known for her acclaimed documentary *A Night of Knowing Nothing*, which premiered at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival's Director's Fortnight side-bar where it won the Oeil d'or (Golden Eye) award.

*All We Imagine As Light* is an Indo-French co-production between 'Petit Chaos' from France and 'Chalk and Cheese Films' from India.



## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

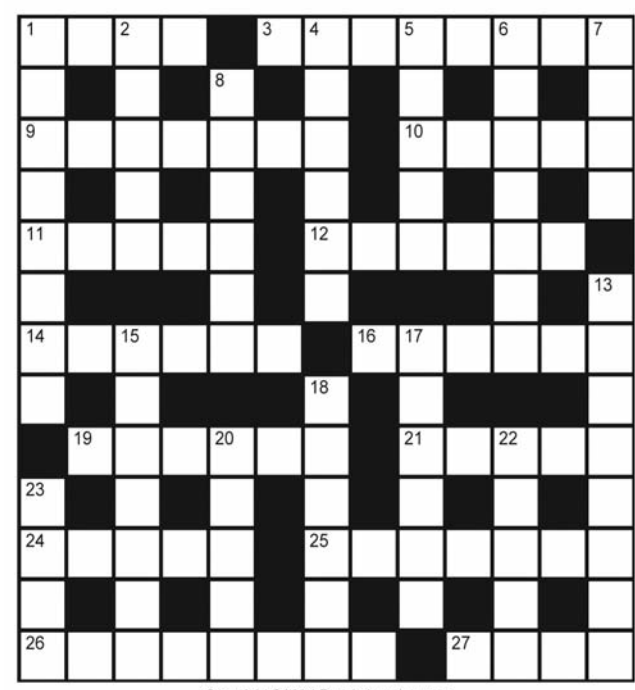


## BREVITY



## FUN post

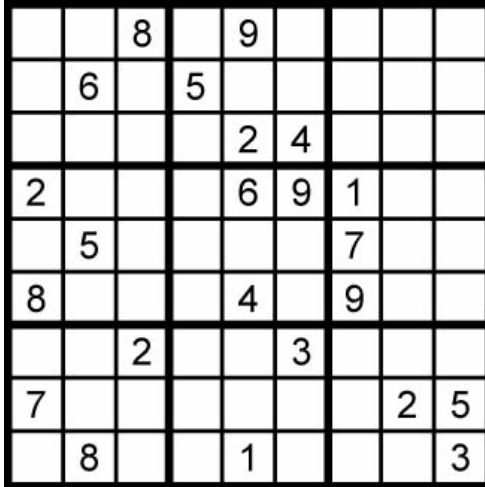
## CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Primary
  - 3 Clover
  - 9 Kind of guy
  - 10 Church offering
  - 11 Repeat
  - 12 Malodour
  - 14 Red deer
  - 16 Hammer
  - 19 Swamp
  - 21 Musical drama
  - 24 Port-au-Prince's land
  - 25 Humanity
  - 26 Wishful thinkers
  - 27 Surrender
  - 7 Razor-sharp
  - 8 Not quite there
  - 13 Span
  - 15 Oath
  - 17 Exist in large quantities
  - 18 Chemical cousin
  - 20 Self-evident truth
  - 22 Cream of the crop
  - 23 Outbuilding
- Down**
- 1 Discount (4,4)
  - 2 Metal bar
  - 4 Torment
  - 5 Metric linear unit
  - 6 Type of illusion

## SUDOKU

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



## SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## IN MEMORIAM

Officials, led by Assembly Secretary Dasarathi Satpathy, pay tribute to Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati on Assembly premises in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



## FIRST-TIMERS VOTE FOR GROWTH, BRIGHT FUTURE



RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 25:** The 2024 general elections which started from April 19 have 1.85 crore young electorates in the age group of 18-19 years who are casting vote for the first time. In Odisha, 7.54 lakh are in the same age group whose votes are going to play a crucial role in determining the fate of the candidates in the fray.

**Orissa POST** spoke to some of the young electorates in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack who exercised their franchise for the first time during the third phase of simultaneous elections, Saturday.

Muskan Rout, who voted at a booth in Rasulgarh area, said, "When I voted for the first time today, many thoughts crossed my mind. I was feeling restless for the last few days, but now after voting, I felt confident. My vote is for education and affordable healthcare."

Baishakhi, another first-timer, said she was nervous and excited to be part of choosing the leader. "We must select leaders who care for Sustainable Development Goals and want to restore and repair environment. I voted for enough job opportunities," said Baishakhi who voted in Cuttack.

Manushuwa Mahapatro, who pressed the EVM at a booth in Rasulgarh area for the first time, said he felt a sense of empowerment as he knew that his voice matters and can contribute in the direction of governance. "Since my childhood, I have been accompanying my mother to a

### Resentment over mobile phone ban

Several voters in the state Saturday expressed strong resentment over the decision to ban mobile phones inside polling booths while exercising their franchise. The CEO's office has also banned smartwatches inside the booths. Those carrying mobile phones said there was no prior information from the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) about the restriction on bringing mobile phones inside polling booths. They also noted there were no proper arrangements for the safe deposit of mobile phones near the polling booths. Several voters returned home without exercising their franchise because security personnel deployed at the booths did not allow them to enter with mobile phones. The CEO's office later issued a statement clarifying that only the Presiding Officer of a polling booth is allowed to carry a mobile phone, while voters and polling agents are barred from bringing mobile phones inside the polling booths.

polling station near my house. The thought of exercising my franchise was exciting. I voted for those who will take the country and state forward," he said. "I want my candidate to work for women's safety, restore environment, provide clean washroom, proper roads and good drainage system," said Simran Singh, 21, who voted for the first time at a booth in Bomikhal area of the Capital City.

## PHASE III POLLS IN TWIN CITIES, PURI

### BHUBANESWAR



### CUTTACK



## Heatwave sweeps India; 50°C in Phalodi

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 25:** Temperatures soared to a searing 50 degrees Celsius in Rajasthan's Phalodi Sunday, as a brutal heatwave swept through large parts of India, testing the endurance of millions, including those who stepped out to vote in the sixth phase of the ongoing general elections.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), 50 degrees Celsius is the highest temperature recorded in the country since June 1, 2019, when Churu, also in Rajasthan, logged a scorching 50.8 degrees Celsius.

Phalodi hit India's all-time high temperature of 51 degrees Celsius May 19, 2016.

The extreme heat affected not only the northern plains and central regions of the country but also the hills of Himachal Pradesh, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Thousands of voters faced scorching temperatures as they stepped out to vote in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections, held in 58 seats across eight states and Union Territories, including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and the national capital.

Many stood in long queues without shade for extended periods. In some places, polling booths lacked water, coolers, and chairs for the elderly, exacerbating the impact of the heat.

Some voters even fainted due to the extreme heat and hot winds in Delhi, where temperatures exceeded 45 degrees Celsius in six locations.



Thousands of voters faced scorching temperatures as they stepped out to vote in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections, held in 58 seats across eight states and Union Territories

(40.5 degrees), Assam's Silchar (40), and Lumding (43), and Arunachal Pradesh's Itanagar (40.5) and Pasighat (39.6) recorded their all-time high temperatures.

Assam's Tezpur (39.5), Mazbat (38.6), Dhubri (38.2), North Lakhimpur (39.2), and Mohanbari (38.8) also saw record-breaking temperatures for May.

Official data showed that at least 17 places in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh recorded maximum temperatures of 45 degrees Celsius or above Saturday.

In Rajasthan, temperatures soared to 48.8 degrees Celsius in Barmer, 48 degrees in Jaisalmer, and 47.2 degrees in Bikaner; prompting the state's disaster management department to direct district collectors to make necessary arrangements to provide relief to people, animals, and birds from the heat.

The extreme heat will continue in parts of Delhi, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, and Maharashtra until May 29. The searing heat will also affect the hills of Himachal Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya.

A 'red' warning has been issued for Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana,

Chandigarh, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat, indicating a 'very high likelihood' of heat illness and heatstroke for all age groups.

The IMD said warm night conditions could further exacerbate heat-related stress in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and Rajasthan over the next four days. High night temperatures are particularly dangerous because the body doesn't get a chance to cool down. Increasing nighttime heat is more common in cities due to the urban heat island effect, where metro areas are significantly hotter than their surroundings.

Akash Vashishtha, founder-secretary of the Society for Protection of Environment and Biodiversity, said that urban regions like Delhi-NCR become heat chambers due to land and surface concretisation, causing a heat multiplier effect.

The severe heat wave conditions in Delhi-NCR are not just typical weather for this time of the year but the consequences of extensively concretised land surfaces creating 'urban heat islands', which amplify the trapped heat in the lower atmosphere.

Incoming solar radiation, once reflected from the land surface, lacks open space to escape to

the upper atmosphere.

The heat gets trapped due to horizontal and vertical concretised structures, significantly raising ambient temperatures, he said.

Vashishtha said immediate steps are needed to keep ground surfaces vegetated to absorb solar radiation and reduce heat reflection and radiation from land surfaces.

The punishing heat in India is straining power grids and drying up water bodies, triggering drought-like conditions in parts of the country.

According to the Central Water Commission, water storage in 150 major reservoirs in India plunged to its lowest level in five years last week, exacerbating water shortages in many states and significantly affecting hydropower generation.

Water levels in the Delhi stretch of the Yamuna river have dropped amid the sweltering heat, affecting water supply. The city also saw power demand reach a record 8,000 megawatts on Wednesday, with air conditioners, coolers, and refrigerators in homes and offices running at full capacity.

Severe and frequent heatwaves are further burdening low-income households, which often have poor access to water and cooling, and testing the endurance of outdoor workers toiling in the searing sun, forcing them to take frequent breaks.

Anna Walnycki of the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development said, "Low-income households have limited capacity to adapt to extreme heat because of poor access to water and electricity."

## Veterans: Sea change in elections over the years

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 25:** They might have forgotten their relative's name, or struggling to recollect where they last left their glasses, but many seasoned voters in the Capital City knew it well they have to cast their votes in the elections, Saturday.

Be it ballot papers or EVMs, they have exercised their franchise several times in Lok Sabha and Assembly election in their life time, and experienced many election seasons.

**Orissa POST** spoke to a cross section of the veterans to know their voting experience and the differences they have witnessed in elections and the electoral process over the years.

90-year-old Braja Bandhu Panda from Rasulgarh has voted for more than 10 times in his life. He said earlier he used to vote by stamping on the ballot paper. "Now we have to press the button on the machine," Panda said adding that despite his advanced age, he still wanted to vote as the event occurs once in every five years. "We must celebrate the elections by participating in it. That is possible only with voting," he said.

Panda, who lives with his son and the latter's family, said, "The new generation must also vote like the elders because without voting you can't expect the change you want."

His son Nrusingha Charan Panda, who has voted for more than five times so far, said elections have changed consider-



ably in last many years, and have become more technology-driven. Jharpada resident Sumati Nayak, 60, who has voted in elections multiple times, said, "Voting is our responsibility and we should not run away from it." Sabita Panda, 70, another veteran voter, said earlier people

had to travel long distances to vote. There used to be little facility available at booths. "But now, voting has become very comfortable. There are facilities like wheelchair for the elderly, 'vote from home' facility and volunteers for help at booths. Those have made voting process easy for elder population," she said.

# Storm 'Remal' likely to make landfall May 26



ther into a severe cyclonic storm by Sunday morning and cross West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh coasts between Sagar Island and Khepupara with a wind speed of 110 to 120 kmph gusting to 135 kmph at around midnight of Sunday," the bulletin said.

This is the first cyclone in the BoB this pre-monsoon season and will be named Remal, given by Oman, according to a system of naming cyclones in the north Indian Ocean region.

An orange alert was issued for Kolkata, Howrah, Nadia and Purba Medinipur districts by the Met, warning of 80 to 90 kmph gusting to 100 kmph wind speed and heavy to very heavy rain at one or two places May 26 to 27.

Wind speed will reach 60 to 70 kmph gusting to 80 kmph over Hooghly, Purba Bardhaman and Paschim Medinipur districts, accompanied by heavy rain.

Other districts in south Bengal will experience a wind speed of 40 to 50 kmph, gusting to 60 kmph, it said.

In north Odisha, the coastal districts of Balasore, Bhadrak and Kendrapara will receive heavy rain during May 26 to 27, while heavy precipitation is likely in Mayurbhanj May 27.

The India Meteorological department warned of localised flooding and major damage to vulnerable structures, power and communication lines, kutcha roads, crops and orchards in South and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal.

People in the affected areas have been asked to remain indoors and vacate vulnerable structures.

The Met office has warned of extremely heavy rainfall in the coastal districts of Balasore, Bhadrak and Kendrapra during May 26 to 27

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, May 25:** A deep depression over the Bay of Bengal (BoB) is likely to concentrate into a cyclonic storm by Saturday evening and make landfall May 26 night along the adjoining coasts of West Bengal and Bangladesh, the Met office said.

The cyclone 'Remal' is likely to make landfall with a wind speed of 110-120 kmph, gusting to 135 kmph, it said.

The Met office has warned of extremely heavy rainfall in the coastal districts of West Bengal and north Odisha during May 26 to 27.

Extremely heavy precipitation may hit parts of northeast India May 27-28.

Storm surge of up to 1.5 metre is expected to inundate low-lying areas of coastal West Bengal and Bangladesh at the time of landfall.

The weather office warned fishermen not to venture into the sea in north BoB till May 27

morning.

The Meteorological department issued a red alert for West Bengal's coastal districts of South and North 24 Parganas May 26 and 27, where extremely heavy rain is likely in some places.

"The weather system - a deep depression situated over the east-central BoB, about 380 kms south of Sagar Island in South 24 Parganas district is likely to concentrate into a cyclonic storm by Saturday evening and move northwards", the Met said in a bulletin.

"It is likely to concentrate fur-



**SATISFIED:** Chief Electoral Officer Nikunja Bihari Dhal gives feedback after casting his vote at a polling booth in Unit I area of Bhubaneswar, Saturday. OP PHOTO

## HC seeks NTA stand on plea by candidate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 25:** The Delhi High Court has sought the stand of the National Testing Agency (NTA) on a petition by a 19-year-old NEET candidate seeking grace marks after she received a torn optical mark recognition (OMR) sheet.

Justice C Hari Shankar issued notice to the NTA and the Centre on the petition by the candidate and directed preservation of her original OMR sheet. OMR sheet for exams is a pre-printed paper security document and contains personal information of the candidate like name and date of birth.

"The respondents are directed

### TORN OMR SHEET



to preserve the original OMR sheets relating to the petitioner in this case," said the court in an order passed May 20.

The petitioner, represented by advocate Tanvi Dubey, said she appeared in the NEET UG -2024 May 5 and found that the seal cover, first page of the question paper of physics portion and the OMR sheet were

torn vertically.

A new question paper and OMR sheet, the petitioner said, was provided to her after a delay of around 30 minutes but she was given only 10 extra minutes to complete her examination.

The petition alleged that she suffered due to NTA's conduct as she was denied a fresh OMR sheet for around 30 minutes and was finally provided with a fresh OMR sheet and question paper after an "unreasonable delay".

She claimed that she had already attempted 60 questions in the old question paper and could not attempt all questions in the new question paper properly with focus and concentration.

"Petitioner is severely prej-

udiced because of the act of the Respondent No.1, as she was not treated in parity with the other candidates due to the events which transpired inside the examination hall. She was not given an occasion to complete the paper in the same manner as the other examinees as her OMR sheet was torn," the petitioner said.

"In light of the foregoing facts and circumstances it is most respectfully prayed that this Hon'ble Court may be pleased to... Issue a writ of declaration or any appropriate writ, order or direction to direct Respondent No.1 to give grace marks to the Petitioner," the plea urged the court.

## POLLING ENDS IN CAPITAL



DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 25:** Barring a few untoward incidents, three constituencies of the Capital city- Bhubaneswar Ekamra, Bhubaneswar North and Bhubaneswar Central- witnessed a peaceful voting Saturday.

The polling which began at 7am saw voters standing in long queues to cast their votes, to avoid the day's humid weather. On the other hand, senior citizens went to booths around 12pm to escape long lines. Many youngsters and working professionals also took part in the voting process.

At a polling booth in Salia Sahi, a minor scuffle broke out between BJD and BJP party workers when MP Aparajita Sarangi paid a surprise visit. This flared up the tension in the area with BJD party workers seen protesting the MP's arrival. The video of the incident got into social media, showing an angry mob surrounding the MP's car and asking her to go back. The cops arrived at the scene and pacified the crowd. A similar situation occurred at booth number 138 in Unit III area which was later brought under control.

## 'PM fancies himself as a godman in his next career'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 25:** "As the reality of defeat dawns on the outgoing Prime Minister, he has become increasingly delusional. He has now proclaimed that his birth was not biological, and that he has been sent by the Creator himself. Perhaps he fancies himself as a godman in his next career," Jairam Ramesh said as the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha polls concluded Saturday.

The Congress claimed the BJP's fate is "all but sealed" with the INDIA bloc having already crossed the halfway mark of 272 seats and is on course for a tally of over 350 seats in total.

Congress general secretary



Jairam Ramesh also claimed the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) is set to sweep the NDA away.

"With six phases of the elections now concluded, voting for 486 seats is over. As the outgoing PM starts figuring out his retirement plans, here's the round-

up of the campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections: The BJP's fate is all but sealed. It has become clear that they are South mein Saaf, aur North, West, and East mein Half," Ramesh said in a post on X.

He claimed the INDIA bloc has grown from strength to strength since Phase 1 and after polling in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and now Delhi, "we are seeing the incredible chemistry that has been built between coalition partners".

"The INDIA alliance has already crossed the halfway mark of 272 seats and is on course for a tally of over 350 seats in total. Indian voters have seen through the outgoing PM's deceptions and manipulations," Ramesh said.

Taking a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said the "outgoing PM" has extra time to plan his retirement, since the BJP's campaign is ending early.

"They cannot even campaign in Haryana and Punjab, and their leaders are being driven out of villages by residents. Farmers' anger and disillusionment with the Kisaan Virodhi establishment is very palpable," he claimed.

"Even his acolytes have taken to the PM's latest re-branding - Puri candidate Sambit Patra proclaimed that even Lord Jagannath is a 'bhakt' of the outgoing PM. The voters of India will teach them both a lesson in humility," he added.

## 'Some people's job to create doubts'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 25:** Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar Saturday said it is some people's job to create doubts and asserted the systems in place at the Election Commission are strong to ensure no mistakes creep in.

He was responding to a question on doubts being cast on the turnout of voters in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. "It is the job of some people to create doubts. Our system is strong, not from today, it has been there for the past 70-72 years," he told PTI Videos.

His remarks come on a day when the poll panel on its own came out with Lok Sabha constituency-wise data on the number of votes cast in the first five phases of the elections.

The turnout figures came a day after the Supreme Court refused to issue directions to the Election Commission on an NGO's plea for uploading polling booth-wise voter turnout data on its website. The EC said that it has decided to further expand the format of turnout data to include the absolute number of voters in every parliamentary constituency.

## Constantly tuned in to child's every need not always ideal

It's crucial for healthy child development that children can form secure attachment bonds with their parents. Decades of research identified one key ingredient for this process: the coordination of parents' and children's brains and behaviour during social interactions.

Brain-to-brain synchrony between parent and child can be helpful for children's attachment, and tends to rise when a parent and child play, talk or solve problems together. Recently, however, we started wondering whether more synchrony is always better.

Is current parenting advice up to date?

A lot of current parenting advice recommends parents to be constantly 'in sync' with their kids. It tells parents to be physically close and attuned to their children and to anticipate and immediately respond to their every need.

The advice is building upon at-

tachment theory and research, which show that higher parental sensitivity and reflective functioning are beneficial for child development and secure attachment formation.

Yet, despite its good intentions, this advice misses several important details. For example, research revealed that for about 50-70 per cent of the time, parents and children are not 'in sync'. During these times, they may be doing separate activities, such as a child exploring something on their own or a parent working. They rather engage in a constant 'social dance' comprising being attuned to each other, failing to do so and repairing this disconnect.

And it's this flow of connection, disconnection and reconnection that offers children an ideal mixture of parental support and moderate, useful stress that helps growing children's social brains.

Researchers agree that there can be negative consequences



Parents should not feel that they must be 'in sync' with their kids all the time and at all costs. High parent-child attunement can also reflect interaction difficulties and can often add up to parental burnout, further negatively impacting the parent-child relationship

to parents and children constantly being tuned in to each other. For example, it can increase stress on the relationship and raise the risk for insecure child attachment. That is especially true if it is associated with parents overstimulating their child or being too responsive to their child's every need. For parent-child synchrony,

there thus appears to be an "optimal midrange". Or, in other words, more synchrony may not necessarily be better.

Brain-to-brain synchrony and attachment

In mother-child pairs, neural synchrony was linked to taking turns in solving puzzles or conversations. And in father-child pairs, synchrony during puz-

zling was linked to dads being confident about and enjoying their role as fathers. But does that mean higher parent-child neural synchrony is always a measure of a good relationship?

The findings suggest that higher neural synchrony may be the result of putting increased cognitive effort into the parent-child interaction. If mothers' attachment representations are insecure, it may be more difficult for mums and kids to coordinate and help each other during activities such as puzzle solving.

A similar explanation may apply to neural synchrony during father-child problem-solving. Dads are more familiar with active, rough-and-tumble play. Engaging in structured and cognitively demanding activities such as puzzles may therefore be more challenging and require more neural synchrony for father-child pairs.

Lessons to be learned

Most importantly, parents

should not feel that they must be "in sync" with their kids all the time and at all costs. High parent-child attunement can also reflect interaction difficulties and can often add up to parental burnout, further negatively impacting the parent-child relationship.

It is of course helpful if parents are emotionally available, skilled in reading their children's cues and promptly and sensitively respond to their needs.

Children can also benefit from freedom and independence emotionally, socially and cognitively, especially as they get older.

What really counts is that the parent-child relationship functions well overall. Those children can develop trust in their parents and that any mismatches, which naturally occur all the time, are successfully repaired. That's the true essence of attachment theory, which is often missed and misrepresented in parenting advice.

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# Odisha villagers vote in West Bengal



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhograi, May 25:** People of Sankhamedi village under this block in Balasore district located adjacent to the West Bengal border cast their votes for the Lok Sabha constituencies in East and West Midnapore districts in the sixth phase of general elections underway in the neighbouring state, Saturday.

Several voters of 12 villages in Balasore and some from Mayurbhanj also voted in the elections for the East and West Midnapore Lok Sabha constituencies of West Bengal. Similarly, over 235 voters in Ward No. 18 of Sankhamedi village under Analia panchayat of Bhograi block voted for the candidates of Kanthi Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal.

The villagers cast their votes at Bagbrajakishore and West

Santeswarpur Primary School in Ramnagar block of West Bengal. Ward member Jyotshna Jena of Sankhamedi village confirmed the development. She admitted that the eligible voters in the village have voted in the election of Kanthi Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal.

Meanwhile, voters in the village are now preparing to vote in the election of Bhograi Assembly seat and Balasore Lok Sabha constituency scheduled to be held in the final phase of polls in Odisha, June 1. They will cast their votes at the booth set up at Analia Primary School under Bhograi block.

The residents of Udayapur, Sahabajipur, Dakhinasarisa, Bajitpur, Narsinghpur, Ganeswarpur, Panisandha, Upula, Sagadasahi and several other villages under Bhograi block bordering West Bengal

are also learnt to have sneaked into the booths of the neighbouring state and voted for their candidates.

Similarly, the dwellers of Raibania and adjoining villages under Jaleswar Assembly constituency in Balasore district were also learnt to have voted for the candidates of West Midnapore Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal.

Sources said that the population of Sankhamedi village under Bhograi Assembly constituency is over 400. The Odisha government has established Anganwadi centre, school, toilets there and provided the villagers ration cards, pension and allowances, power and water supply.

This fringe village has a long-standing border dispute with the two Midnapore districts in West Bengal since 1978 while the state government has stopped collecting revenue from this village since 1962.

The village youths have been deprived of availing higher education as the Odisha government has failed to provide them caste certificates. The soul and body of the villagers reside in Odisha but they are psychologically inclined towards West Bengal as the neighbouring state has included the villagers in its housing schemes and provides them ration and many more government assistance.



**NOBLE GESTURE:** Two girls taking a wheelchair bound disabled woman to a polling booth in Angul, Saturday

OP PHOTO

# Once perennial, Gobari awaits revival

**THE RIVER IS NOW LYING BURIED FOR A STRETCH OF 16 KM FROM PATTAMUNDAI TO GANDAKIA LEADING TO RAMPANT ENCROACHMENT OF THE WATER BODY**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pattamundai, May 25:** Gobari river, which was the lifeline of Kendrapara district once upon a time, is inching towards extinction and urgently awaiting revival. What is left of the Gobari river now is only a grim reminder of its glorious past, gasping for survival.

There was a time when the Gobari river used to be a blessing for the farmers as it irrigated all the farmlands in nine panchayats. Farmers in these panchayats used to reap a bumper harvest by cultivating various vegetables and paddy during the Rabi season on their farmlands.

The river had a deep connection with the life and livelihood of people. People used to finish their daily chores in the river, used its water for drinking and irrigating their farmlands. This



had brought a rare distinction for the river as it came to be known as the lifeline of residents in Kendrapara district.

However, with change in time, the river which flows through five panchayats of Pattamundai block and Pattamundai Municipality area, has now gone out of shape as it has been buried with wild grass and weed at various places. This is because people in the local market and villages are dumping all sorts of wastes in the river. This has angered the residents as the state government is not making any serious effort for its revival.

Originating from the perennial Brahmani river, the river flowed for over 30 km and finally merged with Bay of Bengal. Decades back, Gobari was also a perennial river like Brahmani and helped in transportation of goods

and passengers on boats.

However, bad days arrived for Gobari when the connecting channel of Gobari and Brahmani rivers was blocked during the construction of Cuttack-Chandbali road in 1860. This hindered free flow of water into Gobari river which aided deposition of silt in the river.

Meanwhile, the river is now lying buried for a stretch of 16 km from Pattamundai to Gandakia. This has led some unscrupulous persons to encroach on the water body and construct houses on the riverbed. As a result, thousands of acres of farmland on both sides of the river are now lying uncultivated due to lack of irrigation. This has severely affected the social and economic growth of people.

The attraction for agriculture among the people began to wane

as people migrated to other states in search of livelihood.

The river has now lost its identity due to lack of awareness among the riparian villagers and apathetic attitude of the departmental authorities. The state government and the district administration are aware of the situation but have yet to take any step in this regard. A few years back, efforts were made for its restoration but soon the project was abandoned.

Farmers in the district are demanding for revival of the river but their pleas are yet to be addressed.

When contacted, drainage engineer Nihar Routray said the higher authorities have been apprised of the issue and work for the revival of the river will start after receiving the approval from the concerned authorities.

# Child dies, mother critical in accident

**IN THE LAST FIVE MONTHS, 18 PERSONS IN ROAD AND 21 IN RAIL ACCIDENTS HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES IN SUNDARGARH**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 25:** A six-month-old girl child died and her mother was rendered critical after the two-wheeler they were travelling on was hit by a speeding truck Friday evening in Sundargarh district. The condition of the woman admitted to VIMSAR at Burla is stated to be out of danger.

As per information, one Muni Pradhan was coming to Sundargarh from Bargaon on a scooter. Muni's sister was driving the scooter, who survived

the accident with minor injuries. A speeding truck hit the scooter near Karamdihi and fled from the scene.

The girl child, Sreyansi, was thrown out of her mother's lap up to 20 metre distance and reportedly died on the spot. The two women along with the baby were soon shifted to Sundargarh where the doctors pronounced the child dead. As the condition of Muni turned serious, she was soon shifted to VIMSAR in Burla, where her condition was reported to be out of danger.

In the last six months, 18 persons have lost their lives and over 30 have been left in different stages of injuries in the district. Another disturbing fact has also come to fore that during the last five months, 21 persons have lost their lives due to various kinds of accidents. This number was 24 last year between January to August.

# WOMAN DIES OF ELECTROCUTION



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Buguda, May 25:** A woman died of electrocution at Nua Panikeshar village under Bhagabanpur panchayat and Buguda police limits in Ganjam district Saturday. The deceased woman has been identified as Puspanjali Swain. As per reports, Puspanjali became unconscious after she was electrocuted while removing a plug from the switch board at her house Saturday morning. Family members immediately rescued and rushed her to Buguda hospital. However, she was pronounced 'brought dead' by doctors at the hospital.

On being informed, Buguda police reached the hospital, seized the body and sent it for post-mortem. Police have registered an unnatural death case (6/24) and are investigating the matter.

# ABP 2024-25 unveiled at RSP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 25:** The 'Handbook on Financial Data ABP 2024-25' was unveiled at the Chintan Conference Hall of Finance and Accounts department marking another significant milestone for SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP).

The event was graced by Alok Verma, Executive Director (Mines) and AK Behuria, Executive Director (F&A) in the presence of other senior officers from the Odisha Group of Mines and the F&A department.

In his address, Verma highlighted the critical role of financial data in the making of informed decisions for daily operations. He praised the inclusion of mines data in the handbook and expressed his appreciation for the meticulous work of the



cost and budget team.

During the ceremony, Behuria commended the cost and budget team of the F&A department for their dedication and timely efforts in compiling and printing the handbook. He noted that this was for the first time that consolidated financial data of the RSP and the Odisha Group of Mines have been made available in such a comprehensive format. He emphasised that the

handbook will serve as an essential reference for the RSP collective, providing ready access to crucial financial information related to the Annual Budget Plan (ABP).

Notably, the 'Handbook on Financial Data ABP 2024-25' is expected to be a valuable resource, aiding in the efficient and effective financial management within the RSP and the Odisha Group of Mines.

# Bridge across Deo river remains a non-starter



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 25:** The bridge planned to be built across the Deo river here is a classic example of the government agencies' apathetic attitude towards public causes. The said bridge is regarded as a game changer in the offing for the area like the Jhirpani bridge, which is located just 300 metre away.

But for the compensation of just 52 decimal land, the entire bridge work is in suspended animation. According to sources the sanctioned fund worth over ₹1 crore is already with the administration.

In 2018, it was decided that a bridge will be built over the Deo river, a tributary of Koel, to connect the Mitkundri and Lahanda areas. Despite being a small river, it is an important water body as it is the lifeline for a large tract of land and also the people residing there. The bridge was a long-standing plan so that connectivity will be improved in some of the most fertile patches of land here.

Had the administration given the compensation to the land owners, the bridge work, which has been holding fire, would have got a push. The administration had promised that they would complete this process by March 10. However, work is yet to start even as it's already the end of May.

The villagers had staged a demonstration for over a month near the construction site last October. Following the demonstration which was supported by political leaders of all hues, little concern was showed by the administration. The land owners were invited to Sundargarh and were assured that all their dues would be given by March 10. The dates for the general elections were declared March 17 and the model code of conduct came into effect.

Now the land owners have threatened that they would not allow any construction activity. Interestingly, the land belonging legally to Durga Oram is only 52 decimal, which would have been compensated, as per the promise of the administration, over two months back before the MCC came into force.

The work on the bridge began in 2019 for which the tender process and award of work was over in 2018. During the pandemic in 2020, the work was completely stopped and again started in August 2021. So far, five pillars have been erected and the slabs have been laid on four. Only one pillar is left on which the slab would be laid, which is on the Lahanda side where work has been stopped owing to the compensation issue.

# Minor girl drowns in pond

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Basudevpur, May 25:** In a tragic incident, a 12-year-old girl drowned in a pond at Balinagar village in Ward No. 10 under this municipality in Bhadrak district Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Mamuni Mallik, daughter of Sania Mallik, a resident of Balinagar village.

As per reports, Mamuni had gone to the pond for a bath. However, while bathing in the pond her foot slipped and she fell into the deep water. She was later rescued in an unconscious state and rushed to Basudevpur hospital, where the doctors declared her 'brought dead'. A pall of gloom descended on the village after the news spread.



**Regional Office (Sambalpur Region)**  
1st Floor, At: Christian Para, G.M. College Chowk,  
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FOCUS CHINA

# TOO OLD TO GET RICH



China's persistently low fertility rate, combined with insufficient domestic demand and excess capacity, is likely to intensify deflationary pressures, widening the interest-rate gap between the renminbi and the US dollar

are expected to fall.

Lastly, low fertility rates around the world could lead to low inflation and even outright deflation. China's persistently low fertility rate, combined with insufficient domestic demand and excess capacity, is likely to intensify deflationary pressures, widening the interest-rate gap between the renminbi and the US dollar.

To be sure, if the high-income threshold were to remain unchanged, China might manage to reach it. But its aging population would likely prevent it from escaping the real middle-income trap. The country's household disposable income accounts for only 42% of its GDP, well below the global average of 60-70%. The 2022 high-income threshold translates to per capita disposable income of \$8,307-\$9,692, typically indicative of a large middle class capable of exerting pressure on the government.

By contrast, China's per capita disposable income was just \$5,565 in 2023, and its middle class remains a minority. To cross the high-income threshold, China would need to boost its GDP per capita to \$19,000-22,000. But achieving this requires far-reaching reforms.

Above all, China must raise household disposable incomes and tackle its demographic crisis, both of which require a political and economic overhaul. Given that China today is even more averse to economic reforms than it was when Deng Xiaoping launched his market-oriented reforms in 1978, rapid change is highly unlikely. The required transformation may take several decades, if not longer.

*The writer, a senior scientist in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the author of Big Country with an Empty Nest.*

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In March, Chinese Premier Li Qiang announced an ambitious economic growth target of 5% for 2024. In a subsequent commentary, former World Bank chief economist Justin Yifu Lin endorsed the government's target, predicting that China's economy will grow at an average annual rate of 5-6% over the coming decade before slowing to 3-4% between 2036 and 2050. Lin also suggested that China could achieve high-income status in 2026, if not 2025. Given China's bleak demographic outlook, this seems highly unlikely.

Lin notes that 26 countries had less than half of the United States' GDP per capita when their populations began to age. He argues that since these countries continued to improve their economies after this point, China can, too. The WHO defines the start of an economy's aging phase as the point where the share of those aged 65 and older exceeds 7% - a demographic milestone China reached in 1998. By 2023, the share of Chinese people over 65 increased to 15.4%. Historically, no country has managed to achieve 4% growth in the subsequent 12 years after the elderly made up 15% of the population. The average growth rate for high-income countries during this period is just 1.8%.

An aging population affects production, consumption, entrepreneurship, and innovation, eroding economic dynamism. As the median age and the share of people aged 65 and older increase, GDP growth slows. Consequently, Lin's prediction that China will achieve an annual growth rate of 5-6% between 2024 and 2035 is as improbable as an 80-year-old winning a marathon.

Lin emphasizes China's late-comer advantage, but this is offset by its rapidly aging population. Demographic problems and shrinking labor forces have caused GDP per capita in Spain,

Greece, and Portugal, respectively, to fall from 73%, 66%, and 51% of the US level in 2008 to 39%, 27%, and 32%. Along with other aging societies such as South Korea and Taiwan, these countries are now at risk of falling back into the middle-income trap.

China's aging crisis is reminiscent of what happened in Japan and Germany, whose labor forces began to shrink in the mid-1990s. By 2023, Japan and Germany's GDP per capita had fallen to 41% and 64% of the US level, respectively, from 154% and 110% in 1995.

Similarly, China's median age in 2023 was the same as Japan's in 1995 and Germany's in 2000, while the share of people aged 65 and older matched Japan's in 1996 and Germany's in 1995. Over the 12 years that followed these demographic milestones, Japan's average annual growth rate was 0.8%, and Germany's was 1.4-1.5%. Based on these historical trends, China's growth rate is likely to slow to 3% by 2028 and fall below that of the US from 2031 to 2035.

China's GDP per capita reached \$12,681 in 2023, falling short of the World Bank's high-

income threshold of \$13,845. With an average annual increase of 2.1% over the past two decades, the threshold is projected to rise to \$15,715 by 2028 and \$18,219 by 2035. Assuming that China's per capita GDP growth slows from 5% in 2024 to 3% in 2028 and 1.5% in 2035, its GDP per capita is expected to reach \$17,893 over the next decade. The widening economic gap between China and the US will further impede China's ability to cross the high-income threshold.

Moreover, several factors are expected to put downward pressure on the renminbi, complicating China's efforts to escape the middle-income trap. First, China's labor force is shrinking rapidly, and its industrial value chain is shifting to countries participating in the government's Belt and Road Initiative. Western countries' attempts to reduce their dependency on Chinese supply chains could further weaken China's manufacturing sector, eroding the country's trade surplus.

Second, as economic growth slows and local governments grapple with an escalating debt crisis, Chinese interest rates



Yi Fuxian

**HISTORICALLY, NO COUNTRY HAS MANAGED TO ACHIEVE 4% GROWTH IN THE SUBSEQUENT 12 YEARS AFTER THE ELDERLY MADE UP 15% OF THE POPULATION**



Aakar Patel

**In 1960, Golwalkar said that caste could be used for cross-breeding superior humans, like it was done in animals. This was done by Hindus earlier, through upper caste men fathering the first child of a woman married to someone else**

Spirituality is indeed the master key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinitive is native to it.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Vague Ideology

The Bharatiya Janata Party is India's largest political force but its ideology is not properly understood. Some aspects of it — the opposition to dynasty, the promise of economic development — are clear, even though these may not be adhered to by the party fully. The largest component of the ideology, what is called Hindutva or Hindu nationalism, is more vague. What does it mean and what is it intended to achieve?

Devanura Mahadeva, a famous writer from Karnataka, explores this with his work on the parent body of the BJP. In the book titled 'RSS: The Long and Short of It', Mahadeva attempts to understand what the RSS is and what it wants through the simple device of reading Hindutva's primary texts. These are VD Savarkar's works and MS Golwalkar's Bunch of Thoughts. The writer describes of his motivation to do this through a parable. A sorcerer who spread turmoil was invincible because his life was stored in a parrot in a distant cave. He thus remained untouched by action against his own person. The only way to get at him was to go after this life-soul, in that hidden parrot. Mahadeva thus goes on this quest to see what lies behind Hindutva.

In his encounter with Golwalkar, he finds that the RSS head worshipped caste and asked that the rest of us worship it. In 'Bunch of Thoughts', Golwalkar says that the Hindu people are his god and this god manifests itself through caste. Meaning the organisation of Hindu society in the way Manu described it (Brahmin head, Kshatriya arms, Vaishya thighs and Shudra feet) is the entity that is worthy of worship. In 1960, Golwalkar said that caste could be used for cross-breeding superior humans, like it was done in animals. This was done by Hindus earlier, through upper caste men fathering the first child of a woman married to someone else. It may interest readers to know that Europe in the feudal period may have had something similar called droit du seigneur ('right of the lord'), allowing feudal lords to have sexual relations with subordinate women on the wedding nights of the women. That this is straight exploitation of the weak and not some noble thing does not appear to have occurred to Golwalkar.

If such things are not pushed forth by the RSS cadre or the BJP it is not because these statements have been withdrawn but because they are likely confident that few people will do what the author has done and actually read the primary texts. It would be interesting to see a television debate recently around whether or not the caste system should be worshipped and ossified as the RSS wants it to be.

Mahadeva makes a number of original observations. He says that the RSS has defanged the religions that sprang out of India but rejected the caste that he wants worshipped. "The RSS tries to pull out the teeth and nails of Jaina, Bouddha, Sikh, Lingayat and other dharmas that were born in India and rejected the Chaturvarna order". By merely saying that these are Hindu faiths, it is sought to subsume them.

There is no resistance to this internally, he writes, because the RSS in fact does not encourage thinking. Of the title 'Bunch of Thoughts' itself he says that there is not much thinking in the work, only a series of "random, dangerous beliefs and that too from a bygone age." Thinking is discouraged in the RSS through the insistence on order over diversity. The RSS 'tames' its volunteers, Mahadeva writes and quotes Golwalkar as saying that they must "do what is told... if told to play kabaddi play kabaddi, told to hold meeting then meeting... their discretion is not required."

Among the things that this cadre is taught is that the constitution is flawed. The very idea of states is offensive to them, because there can be only one Bharat Mata and the existence of a Karnataka, Gujarat or Bengal is wrong. The stress for homogeneity over diversity shows, the author writes, in such things as nomenclature. The RSS and the BJP refer to Adivasis as 'vanvasis' (forest dwellers), this eroding their indigenous identity.

Mahadeva calls Hindutva a 'cow-faced tiger', an entity that is eating at Indian society from within. The prime minister he says is popular but is only an "utsava murti", an replica of a idol that is led out at a procession. "The real deity sits in Nagpur, inside the RSS shrine." The only qualifications required of the utsava murti are the ability to put up a show and mesmerise the people. Mahadeva asks "don't we see all of this today?"

What does he offer as a solution? He gives the example of a village that is overrun by thieves.

"Firstly, the entire town wakes up. At night the youth take turns patrolling and keeping watch in the mohallas. Women carry chilli powder with them. This is the kind of this awakening and vigil we all need. Because these thieves can come in different guises; they may come for temple maintenance for instance. Fake news can be spread. Hymn singing can be organised. The only way out is to first uncover the plot. This requires us to be vigilant. Further, at least now, the sane voices which are a scattered few need to speak up about right and wrong. Words like love, tolerance, justice need to be heard from within our society."

The intellectual content of books is sometimes judged by how long they are. Mahadeva himself refers to his work as a 'booklet'. Let this description not mislead the potential reader. This is a first rate work which is the most important intellectual attack on the times we are going through, and for that reason has also become the most popular.

### WISDOM CORNER

**If you begin to understand what you are without trying to change it, then what you are undergoes a transformation.** JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

**Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted.** VLADIMIR LENIN

**In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.** LUTHER KING, JR.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1868:** The impeachment trial of U.S. President Andrew Johnson—who had been accused of, among other things, bringing "into disgrace, ridicule, hatred, contempt, and reproach the Congress of the United States"—ended with his acquittal in the Senate.

**1876:** The Challenger Expedition, a groundbreaking oceanographic exploration cruise carried out by the British Admiralty and the Royal Society, concluded successfully.

**1897:** Irish writer Bram Stoker published the Gothic horror classic Dracula, which became the basis for an entire genre of literature and films about vampires.

### SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

## High time India makes strategic move

The Foreign Minister of Switzerland, Alexandre Fasel, was in Delhi to persuade the South Block to attend the Ukraine peace conference. Switzerland is taking the initiative in organising this conference. It is inviting the countries that have not joined the Western alliance against Russia. The idea is to broaden the global consensus on the war in Ukraine. The initiative goes well with Switzerland, which has a history of neutrality during both the World Wars. In the war in Ukraine, however, Switzerland has joined other Western countries in sanctioning Russia.

The Swiss Foreign Minister defends this, "remaining neutral does not mean being indifferent to the ongoing war and doing nothing to stop it." On the Indian part, New Delhi has followed the policy of non-alignment, which could be synonymous with neutrality, and, of late, multi-alignment. Given the historical relations between India and Russia, New Delhi has to decide whether or not to go to this conference. South Block has so far deferred the decision to the after-Parliamentary elections in the country.

It is high time that New Delhi makes a strategic decision on attending the peace conference. In

terms of realpolitik, it may not be an easy decision. But there has to be a balance between international rules and national interest, the former should ideally be privileged. New Delhi has the image of adopting ethical standards in its foreign policy. India's first Prime Minister, Nehru, was often accused of being too ethical and less pragmatic.

Be that as it may, it is part of history. What should New Delhi do now? For various reasons, India has a credible reckoning in the world. New Delhi's presence will have a significant impact on the proceedings. As a close partner of Russia, a member of the BRICS and SCO, a leader in the Global South, and an aspirant for world leadership, India is at the top of the list of invitees.

The countries that have agreed to participate in the conference are mostly from the European Union, NATO alliance, G-7 countries, and close allies of the USA like Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Interestingly, Russia has not been invited. The Swiss Foreign Minister clarified that their approach was to bring over the BRICS leaders, BRICS minus Russia. They would convey the outcome of the discussion in the conference to Moscow, and later invite the Russian leadership for another round of talks. Two BRICS mem-

bers, South Africa and Brazil, have declined the invitation for their respective reasons. Therefore, the world's attention is on China and India, whether they will attend or not. The incumbent Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, however, has agreed to participate in the peace summit.

Any peace process in Ukraine will be futile or inconclusive without the participation of Russia. Regardless of the Russian reaction to the peace initiative, it may appear to be one sided without their participation. The Russian leadership is construing it as a pressure tactic by the Western allies.

To the above perceptions, the Swiss argue that the approach they are taking is 'unorthodox'. It is realised that both sides - Ukraine and Russia - could not be at the same table at this point. It is also true that the conflict cannot be resolved without two parties agreeing to any negotiated framework.

Recall that India has been stressing on dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. The peace conference in Switzerland aims to create a process for dialogue to end this horrible conflict in Ukraine. Also, security and trade go together. India has signed the Trade and Economic Partnership

Agreement (TEPA) with EFTA countries earlier this year after 16 years of negotiation. The four European countries constituting EFTA - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland - are looking at investing \$100 billion in India over the next 15 years. As India and Switzerland are coming closer with a broad-based bilateral framework, New Delhi should respond positively to the invitation for the peace conference. At any rate, the Swiss peace conference is a beginning for more such meetings in pursuit of durable peace between Russia and Ukraine. Conflicts and chaos have a disruptive influence on the developing countries in the Global South. New Delhi will of course be watching the Chinese move vis-à-vis the conference.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had gone to several European countries, including Ukraine to discuss ending the war. Irrespective of the Chinese decision, New Delhi should attend the peace conference to reiterate its position on dialogue and diplomacy, as Narendra Modi had ticked off Vladimir Putin on the fringe of Samarkand summit that, "it is no time for war".

*The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism*

INF



DK Giri

**THE SWISS PEACE CONFERENCE IS A BEGINNING OF MORE SUCH MEETINGS IN PURSUIT OF DURABLE PEACE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE**

### 'Sat-chi' magic

Sir, For long, Indian badminton glory lay in its singles however. Since 2022, two men have consistently made India proud on the world badminton circuit. Affectionately called 'Sat-Chi', 22-year-old Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and 25-year-old Chirag Shetty have been taking the badminton world by storm. The duo recently lifted the Thailand Open 2024 badminton title with an easy win over their Chinese opponents, Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi, and reclaimed the world number one ranking they had first attained in October last year. The super 1000 Indonesian Open title, the super 500 Korean Open, and the super 300 Swiss Open, all won last year, have added feathers to the overflowing cap of Sat-Chi. The Thailand Open has a special place in the hearts of the two, as the pair won it in 2019 as well. Both players complement each other very well on the court, and their smashes and retrievals from impossible angles have rendered them dangerous for their opponents. 'Sat-Chi' has set their eyes on the Paris Olympics, and much is expected of them.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### UK's Kohinoor loot

Sir, The British got a 5-year-old Indian prince to gift the Kohinoor diamond to them. Hence, it's no longer morally defensible for the UK to hold on to this loot. The Kohinoor was mined in India and was one of the largest diamonds ever mined. After changing hands among various kings in India for centuries, it found its way to the legendary Ranjit Singh, who ruled Punjab. The British conquered Punjab after his death in 1849 and installed his 5-year-old son Daleep Singh as king under the regency of the British. Later, they got this child to gift the diamond to them. They also moved Daleep Singh to England, converted him to Christianity, and did not allow him to meet his mother or any other Indian relative so that he wouldn't be aware of his heritage. With King Charles-III succeeding to the throne after his mother's death (Queen Elizabeth-II) on August 8, the 105-carat diamond, which is steeped in history, will go to his wife, Duchess of Cornwall Camilla, who has now become Queen consort. Hence, we Indians would like King Charles III to return the Kohinoor diamond to its rightful owner.

Jubel D'Cruz, MUMBAI

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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# Manipur ethnic rift splinters sporting dreams

**MANIPUR HAS BEEN A HOTBED OF INDIAN SPORT, SENDING A STREAM OF ATHLETES TO THE OLYMPICS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS**

REUTERS

**Bangalore, May 25:** Ethnic clashes in Manipur saw its most successful women's club fail to field a team in the Indian Women's League in 2023-24, with its coach fleeing his burning home and a number of players in self-imposed exile interstate.

The unrest in the northeastern state, which has resulted in more than 200 dead and tens of thousands displaced, divided football teams like Eastern Sporting Union (ESU) along ethnic lines and forced some players out of the state.

"At first we didn't think it would be that bad, but suddenly it was everywhere," former ESU skipper Irom Prameshwori Devi, who has since joined East Bengal, told Reuters of the outbreak of violence. "We had five Kuki players in the team ... they were scared because Kukis were being attacked on the streets of Imphal. We were trying to assure them it would be fine, but houses were being burned by them," she said.

Violence erupted in Manipur May 3, last year between the majority Meitei and minority Kuki communities over the potential sharing of economic benefits and quotas in government jobs



and education. As warring groups set fire to each other's homes and places of worship, football teams in the capital Imphal also found themselves splintered.

ESU coach Ngampao Kipgen, a member of the Kuki tribe, told Reuters he was forced to flee to the hills with his family after his house was burned down.

"They came in the middle of the night. I had to leave with my wife and children," Ngampao said. "I have no team here, no income. I am helpless," he added. According to official figures released in February, Ngampao's house was one of more than 13,000 structures destroyed during the violence.

ESU manager Homendro Irengbam said the conflict, which broke out while the team was playing in the IWL in the western state of Gujarat, drove a

wedge between players. "Our Kuki players were staying with Meitei roommates but once the conflict started, they wanted to stick together," he said. Match preparation, team meetings, everything was disturbed. That was reflected on the field, he said.

The team tried to put on a united front, Devi said, but finished fourth in the group stage before crashing out in the semi-finals of the 2022-23 competition, a contest they had won in the inaugural 2016-17 season.

When the tournament ended, the manager urged his players not to return to Manipur.

"If you go back, you'll become village defence volunteers. You'll stop playing football and join the war," Irengbam said he told them.

While most ESU first team players were signed by clubs around India, many Manipuri

players did not escape the fighting.

Some players have joined volunteer units. They have taken up arms. It's a miserable situation, ESU coach Ngampao said.

Today, Manipur remains divided with Meiteis controlling the Imphal valley, which includes the state capital and most of the sporting infrastructure.

The Kukis are in surrounding hills with the two sides separated by a stretch of no-man's land monitored by federal paramilitary forces.

Manipur has been a hotbed of Indian sport, sending a stream of athletes to the Olympics and other international competitions.

The state women's team has won 22 of 28 national soccer championships, claiming their most recent title earlier this month, but without any Kuki players.

Today, Manipur remains divided with Meiteis controlling the Imphal valley, which includes the state capital and most of the sporting infrastructure

The Kukis are in surrounding hills with the two sides separated by a stretch of no-man's land monitored by federal paramilitary forces

Six players from Manipur, none of whom are Kukis, are in the women's national team, which is ranked 55 places above the men and represents India's best hope of World Cup qualification.

But ESU can no longer afford to play in the national Indian Women's League after community contributions dried up due to the conflict. "Unfortunately, we were not able to even pay some of the players," Irengbam said.

Midfielder Lhingneilam Kipgen, one of ESU's Kuki players, said she had not returned to Manipur due to the violence and joined Delhi-based Garwhal United, but still missed her old club.

"I hope ESU come back. When things are better I want to join again," she said.

The unrest also prevented Kuki players reporting for pre-season training for Imphal-based NEROCA and TRAU, the two biggest men's soccer teams in the state. Both teams have since been relegated from India's second tier after playing the 2023-24 season in exile.

"The mental trauma is still there for all the players. We are participating against all odds," TRAU general secretary Phulen Meitei said.

"Our own people are being killed ... football is less important than life," he said.

# Stung by bar bribery charge, Vijayan unlikely to tweak liquor policy

**CONGRESS-LED UDF DEMANDS JUDICIAL PROBE INTO KERALA 'BAR SCAM'**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 25:** With the opposition demanding the resignation of Excise Minister MP Rajesh in view of the audio clip asking bar owners to pay ₹2.50 lakh each for 'favourable liquor policies', the Pinarayi Vijayan government is unlikely to tweak the existing policy.

State CPI(M) secretary MV Govindan denied any change in the policy. He said, "When there is no news, the news gets created and this is what has happened. The state government has already clarified that no decision has been taken, why all this noise then."

However, after a political uproar on the issue, Minister Rajesh wrote to the state police chief to probe the audio clip and register the case.

The case will be filed against Animon, the president of the Idukki Federation of Kerala Hotel Association who is also the vice president of the apex body of bar hotel owners. It was his audio clip that went viral.

Generally, the annual liquor policy comes into effect from April 1 but this time as the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha polls is in force, it was deferred.

A few of the relaxations, which were said to be included in the

new liquor policy, are lifting of dry days (i.e., the first of every calendar month), and extending the timings for liquor sales at stores and bars.

After the controversy surfaced, the president of the majority bar owners in the state, Sunil Kumar categorically denied any drive to collect funds to be given for formulating a favourable liquor policy. He said the bar owners had met to discuss buying a building in the state capital for their association.

But his denial fell flat after the agenda of the meeting had no mention of their building project, instead it was about the proposed liquor policy.

The Congress-led opposition is likely to pester over their demand for the resignation of Rajesh.

The BJP leadership has said this is a similar version of the Delhi liquor policy, which saw top leaders like CM Arvind Kejriwal land in jail.

So with the government ordering the case, it will not be long before Animon is questioned.

In 2015 the then excise minister, KM Mani had to quit after an allegation surfaced that he had taken ₹1 crore bribe from bar owners. And, in the latest case, the audio clip says the demand is ₹2.5 lakh, which could add up to over ₹20 crore.

# 1,430 Myanmar nationals took shelter in Mizoram in last 10 days

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Aizawl, May 25:** A total of 1,430 Myanmar nationals took shelter in the northeastern state of Mizoram in the last 10 days amid fresh clashes in the neighbouring country between the army and 'pro-democratic forces', an official said Saturday.

According to an official, at least 40 Myanmar nationals including women and children crossed the India-Myanmar forested border Friday and Saturday. They took shelter in Mizoram's Saitual and Champhai districts.

Villagers of the two districts are providing food and shelter to the refugees, sources said.

According to a Mizoram government official, the refugees, mostly belonging to Myanmar's Chin state, fled to different villages of Mizoram due to fear triggered by the armed clashes between 'Tatmadaw' (Myanmar military) and pro-democratic forces led by the Chin National Army.

Villagers claimed the migrants



also feared air raids by the country's air force.

District officials, meanwhile, have been collecting the details of the Myanmar nationals.

Meanwhile, opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) leader TC Pachhunga said that despite continuous demands, the Centre has not yet provided any assistance to the Mizoram government to provide relief to the refugees from Myanmar, Bangladesh and internally displaced people from Manipur.

Addressing a party meeting at the MNF office here, Pachhunga said the Central government,

considering the humanitarian aspects, must provide financial and other support.

He said that the previous MNF government on several occasions had urged the Central government to provide funds to take care of the migrants from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Manipur.

As per the government records, the total number of refugees who entered Mizoram since February 2021 has risen to around 36,000.

Most refugees stay in rented accommodation and the homes of their relatives or friends, while others live in 149 relief camps across seven districts of the state.

The Myanmar nationals who took shelter in Mizoram are mostly from the Chin community, who share ethnic, cultural and traditional ties with the Mizos.

Six Mizoram districts -- Champhai, Siaha, Lawngtlai, Hnahthial, Serchhip and Saitual -- share a 510-km long unfenced border with Myanmar's Chin state.



A fisherman jumps off his boat as it capsizes on its way to Vizhinjam from Shangumugham coast, in Thiruvananthapuram, Saturday

# NE states likely to witness moderate to very heavy rain

**Guwahati/Agartala:** Most northeastern states will witness moderate to very heavy rainfall for three days from Sunday due to a severe cyclonic storm arising from a depression over the central Bay of Bengal, according to forecast by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). As per an IMD statement, the cyclonic storm would intensify into a severe cyclonic storm by Saturday night, continue to move nearly northwards and is very likely to cross Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal coasts between Sagar Island and Kheupara around Sunday midnight as a severe cyclonic storm with a wind speed of 110-120 kmph, gusting to 130 kmph. The IMD said that light to moderate rainfall at most places, with heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places, is likely to occur in Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland from May 26 to 28. Isolated extremely heavy rainfall is likely over Assam and Meghalaya May 27 and 28, Mizoram and Tripura May 27, and Arunachal Pradesh May 28, the IMD statement said.

# Widespread rains in Kerala cause damage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 25:** The ongoing spell of heavy rains in Kerala has hit normal life, with scores of houses being damaged, roads being submerged, trees uprooted, flood water entering houses and trains running late as a result of the steady downpour that continued to lash the state Saturday.

Flood water entered houses, schools and shops located in low-lying areas of Kuttanad in coastal Alapuzha district. Potholes appeared on roads, posing a threat to vehicle users in many places there.

At Kaikulangara in Kollam district, a family of four had a narrow escape as the tiled roof of their house collapsed due to heavy showers.

Residents of the house escaped with minor injuries and were taken to a nearby hospital, police said. Another house in Kannettumukku here was completely damaged following downpour in the small hours today, they said.

However, the elderly woman

## YELLOW ALERT IN SEVEN DISTRICTS



living in it said she had a miraculous escape as she ran out to the courtyard hearing a sound in the night.

Several roads were battered and houses damaged in the coastal village of Pozhiyur, which witnessed intense sea incursion Friday evening.

Relief camps were set up in the area and fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea due to the continuing inclement weather.

Intense water-logging and uprooting of trees disrupted normal life in towns and villages alike in several parts of the

partially damaged due to torrential downpour in the district where several families were shifted to relief camps in the past few days.

Meanwhile, the IMD sounded a yellow alert in seven districts of the state, including Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Idukki, Kottayam and Ernakulam.

A yellow alert indicates heavy rainfall between 6cm and 11cm. The weather department predicted isolated heavy rain in these districts in the coming hours. As per the latest update of the Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), high waves ranging from 0.5 to 3.1 metres and sea incursions are predicted along the coast of Kerala from southern Vizhinjam to northern Kasaragod until Saturday night.

In view of the warning, authorities have advised people not to venture into the sea and stay away from beaches.

Those who live on sea shore were asked to move to safer places if necessary as the chances of sea incursion were higher.

# Heatwave: Assam DGP urges water aid from public to cops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, May 25:** Amidst the ongoing heatwave in Assam, Director General of Police GP Singh Saturday appealed to people to offer drinking water to police personnel serving in their neighbourhoods and workplaces.

"An appeal to helpful and warm hearted people of Assam - In view of continuous high temperatures, it is requested that drinking water may please be provided to policemen and women deployed near your houses, offices, commercial & business establishments as long as the heat wave lasts," Singh posted on 'X'.

The DGP said the police personnel have been advised to carry water bottles with them but "we would be grateful if these bottles are refilled as and when required. Assam Police shall always remain grateful".

He also posted pictures of senior officers distributing drinking water to policemen and women in Guwahati and complimented them for the initiative.

The DGP also posted pictures of people offering drinking water to travellers and Assam Police personnel in different parts of the state. The state has been reeling under a heatwave since the past few days with temperatures crossing 40 degrees Celsius in many districts.

School timings in various districts, including Kamrup (Metro), have been adjusted. Classes will now commence at 7.30am, concluding for lower primary schools by noon, middle schools by 12.30pm, and high schools by 1pm.

District authorities have issued directives to conduct morning assemblies indoors or in shaded areas, ensuring electric fans are operational, and advising students not to wear blazers, waistcoats, and ties. Additionally, students who find wearing shoes uncomfortable are permitted to wear sandals during this period, the directive said.

Schools have also been instructed to promptly inform parents if students feel unwell and to seek medical assistance from the nearest hospital as necessary.



## BJD WILL FORM STABLE GOVT IN ODISHA AGAIN: NAVEEN



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, May 25:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday asserted that the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) will form a stable government in the state again. The 77-year-old BJD leader went to the polling station on foot

from his residence, Naveen Niwas, to cast his vote at the Aerodrome Colony UP School here. Interacting with media persons after casting vote, Naveen said, "I expect the Biju Janata Dal to emerge victorious in both the Assembly and parliamentary elections. We will form a very stable government in the state again

### LS POLLS PHASE - VI

## Dignitaries, politicians, wrestlers queue up to exercise franchise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 25:** Several dignitaries, including President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, and politicians cast their vote in the national capital, while in Haryana, many prominent wrestlers like Babita Phogat and Yogeshwar Dutt exercised their franchise in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha polls, Saturday. In the penultimate round, 58 parliamentary constituencies in eight states and Union Territories (UTs) went to polls. Simultaneously, polling was also held for 42 Assembly seats in Odisha.

### Here are highlights of the day:

- President Murmu cast her vote at an all-women polling booth - decorated in pink and white colours - inside the President's Estate, while Vice President Dhankhar voted at the polling station at the CPWD service centre in Delhi's North Avenue.
- Several politicians, including Delhi Chief Minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, were seen at polling stations in

Delhi along with their family members. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar along with his family cast his vote in Delhi

In Haryana, prominent wrestlers like Phogat, Dutt and Reetika Hooda were seen in queues outside polling booths.

In a bid to increase polling percentage in urban booths in Jharkhand's Ranchi, the district administration tied up with a bike-taxi aggregator to provide free pick-and-drop facilities to voters.

Jammu and Kashmir: People living along the Line of Control (LoC) in Sehar and Makri under the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency cast their vote without the fear of cross-border shelling. A renewed ceasefire between India and Pakistan came into effect February 25, 2021, providing much needed relief to border residents.

There were reports from parts of Odisha that a large number of people expressed frustration over curbs on carrying mobile-phones to polling booths, with some returning without casting their votes.

with the blessings of the people and Lord Jagannath."

"I request all voters, especially the young voters, to come out and exercise their right to franchise," the CM added.

Polling took place at 10,551 polling booths in six Lok Sabha constituencies - Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Puri and Bhubaneswar - and 42 Assembly segments under these constituencies for the third phase of polling in the state.

A total of 64 candidates are in the fray for the six Lok Sabha seats while 383 candidates are contesting for 42 Assembly segments.

Several high-profile leaders, including BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra, senior BJP leaders Aparajita Sarangi, Bhartruhari Mahtab and former corporate honcho Santrupt Mishra are in the fray.

## Free Odisha from 'captivity': Smriti Irani

IF VOTED TO POWER THE BJP WOULD APPOINT AN ODIA CM, SAYS THE UNION MINISTER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 25:** Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Smriti Irani has urged people to vote for the BJP to liberate Odisha's future from BJD's "captivity".

Speaking at an election rally in Kujang within Jagatsinghpur Lok Sabha constituency, Saturday, Irani said, "There's talk that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik lacks the freedom to express himself and meet others independently. The entire BJD leadership is in captivity. Free Odisha's future from this confinement by pressing the lotus button, June 1."

She declared that if voted to power, the BJP would appoint an Odia CM. Irani accused BJD leaders of involvement in a Rs 32,000-crore chit fund scam, a Rs 60,000-crore mining scam, and criticised the state's ruling party for awarding them poll tickets. "How long will Odisha endure



all this," she questioned.

Irani alleged that the BJD government had fostered land, coal, sand, and mining mafias in the state, with ministers, MLAs, supporters, and remote controllers from Tamil Nadu working incessantly to plunder the state's resources.

In contrast, she highlighted Narendra Modi's commitment

to building a developed India by 2047. "To witness a deluge of development, vote for the lotus on June 1 and establish a double-engine government in the state," she urged.

Turning to the issue of the missing key to the Ratna Bhandar (treasury) of Lord Jagannath, Irani queried, "How was the key misplaced? Why

has the judicial commission report on the missing key case been suppressed?"

She issued a warning to the remote-controlled government, stating that if any irregularities were found in the management of the Ratna Bhandar, Modi's government would hold them accountable.

Irani accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of clandestinely supporting the BJD and contrasted the mining revenue of Odisha during the UPA regime with the substantial increase under the Modi government.

"During the UPA regime, Odisha was getting only Rs 5,000 crore mining revenue a year, which shot up to over Rs 50,000 crore after the Modi government came to power," she added.

The BJP leader appealed to the public to vote for Modi, highlighting his initiatives such as free rations, drinking water, solid housing, and financial aid to farmers.

## Odia film fraternity turns up to vote



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 25:** A string of actors of the Odia film industry cast their votes during the third phase of the simultaneous elections in the state for six Lok Sabha and 42 Assembly segments - Saturday.

After casting their votes at different polling booths in the state Capital, actors Babushaan Mohanty, Partha Sarthi Ray, Arindam Roy, Sailendra Samantaray, Anu Choudhury, Archita Sahu, Elina Samantaray, Swapna Priyadarshini, Sivani Sangita, and others, shared their images on social media showing the indelible ink mark on their fingers. They also shared messages to their fans and followers

appealing them to vote. Actor Babushaan Mohanty who along with his wife Tripti Satpathy voted in Bhubaneswar, said in an Instagram post: "You have got the power use it wisely."

Actor Partha Sarthi Ray said: "Did my part as responsible citizen, hope you all do yours. Do vote."

Actress Elina Samantaray said: "Voting is our right and our duty."

Actor Arindam Roy, who is contesting from Salipur Assembly seat on a BJP ticket, said after voting in Cuttack: "I participated in the great festival of democracy. I discharged my constitutional duty and responsibility by voting. You should also shoulder your re-

sponsibility. Vote for the right candidate."

Actor Sailendra said: "We can choose, that's the catch of democracy."

Actress Swapna Priyadarshini who voted for the first time said: "I casted my vote for the first time today. I have done my part. Have you?"

Actress Archita Sahu said: "My Vote My Right."

Actress Elina said: "Voting is our right and our duty."

Anu Choudhury said: "I exercised my right to Vote, did You." National award winning Odia directors Anupam patnaik, Nila Madhab Panda also showed their inked fingers after casting votes at a polling station.

## NRI travels from UAE to vote in Sambalpur

PNN & AGENCIES

**Sambalpur, May 25:** A Non-Resident Indian (NRI) travelled thousands of miles from Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to cast his vote in the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the state, Saturday.

Priyadarshree Panigrahi, son of former parliamentarian and state minister Sriballav Panigrahi, has been staying in Dubai in the UAE since 2008.

He undertook a 20-hour grueling journey from Dubai to Kolkata via flight and then by train to Jharsuguda and finally by road to Sambalpur to reach his polling station at 11.30am to exercise his franchise.

"I have a special connection with Sambalpur. I grew up here and my late father represented Sambalpur twice in 1971 and 1974 in the Odisha Assembly. So, coming here and voting was also my way of paying homage to my motherland and to my late father."

"I view voting as not only a right but also as a responsibility. I firmly believe that every vote counts. It is our duty to participate in the electoral process, no matter where we live in the world," he said.



He plans to return to Dubai Sunday after spending only a day in Odisha. "My journey has attracted widespread attention, symbolising the global reach of Indian democracy and the enduring commitment of its citizens, no matter where they reside. If my journey encourages even one more person to vote, it will be worth it," the NRI added.

At the age of 32, his father became India's youngest cabinet minister in the Nandini Satpathy government in 1973.

Priyadarshree and his elder daughter Tisya are noted scuba divers. They are among the very few father-daughter advanced scuba divers from India and are always in the news for their unique scuba diving escapades.



BJD's Tirtol Assembly nominee Ramaknat Bhoi with party workers and leaders after inaugurating a party office at Tarpur Old Bazar under Raghunathpur block of Jagatsinghpur district, Saturday



ST chairman Kartik Pandian addressing an election meeting in the presence of party's Jajpur Lok Sabha nominee Sharmistha Sethy and Binjharpur Assembly (reserve) candidate Pramila Mallik at Yagna ground in Binjharpur of Jajpur district, Saturday



Congress leaders of Chandbali Assembly constituency in Bhadrak district addressing a press conference, Saturday



Congress candidate Kishan Panda for Dharmasala Assembly constituency campaigning at Kushthapasi village under Baulamal panchayat in the constituency in Jajpur district, Saturday





**We fought against Pakistan and got independence for Bangladesh. China encroached on our land and is constructing houses and roads and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is silent. Where is the 56-inch chest?**  
MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

## RAJASTHAN SET TO PLANT 6L SAPPLINGS

As Rajasthan is witnessing a continuous heatwave, the government has decided to plant six lakh saplings in the state. The Medical and Health Department will also run the 'Hari-Van' tree plantation campaign in all medical institutions of the state to protect the environment and increase greenery



## of the day quote

Bihar is the land which has given a new direction to the fight for social justice. I wish to declare on its soil that I will foil the plans of the INDIA bloc to rob SCs, STs and OBCs of their rights and divert these to Muslims  
NARENDRA MODI | PM, INDIA

Due to the wrong policies of the BJP government, the country's economy is being adversely affected. Poverty, unemployment and inflation are continuously increasing while corruption has not ended yet  
MAYAWATI | BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF

Witnessing the huge support for the INDIA bloc, I am confident that when the votes are counted June 4, the BJP will definitely be wiped out from Uttar Pradesh  
AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

## X POST OF THE DAY

Every single national institution has been reduced into a spineless, servile vehicle of BJP/Modi, forced to offer the lamest of excuses to evade accountability or scrutiny: Election Commission: "record of votes polled disclosure can lead to mischief" SBI: "electoral bonds details intellectual property of the bank" RBI: "demonetisation details will affect India's economic interests"  
@BEASTOFTRAIL

## SHORT TAKES

### UP: Couple burnt alive inside the car

**Hardoi:** A couple was burnt alive when their car caught fire after colliding with a tree here, police said Saturday. According to the police, the incident took place Friday near Baghrai village on the Hardoi-Sandi road in this district. Akash Pal (23), resident of Kotwali police station area here, had reached Sandi Friday with his wife Kirti (20) for some work. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Hardoi East Nripendra said. Their car collided with a tree on the roadside near Baghrai village and caught fire, the ASP said, adding that the couple was burnt alive inside the vehicle.

### Blast in explosive factory, 1 killed

**New Delhi:** One person was killed and six were injured in a blast at an explosives manufacturing factory in Chhattisgarh's Bemetara district today, officials said. The explosion occurred in the unit located near Pirda village in Berla development block, a district administration official said. Soon after being alerted, police and rescue teams were rushed to the site, he said.

### Factory blast: Owner sent to police custody

**Thane (Maharashtra):** A Thane court Saturday sent the owner of Amudan Chemical Pvt Ltd in Dombivli, where a huge blast-cum-blaze killed 13 persons May 23, to police custody till May 29. Malay P Mehta (38), the owner-director of the chemical factory, was produced before the Magistrate in Kalyan after his arrest from Thane Friday. His aged mother Malati P Mehta, who was detained in Nashik, has been let off since she had no involvement in the routine affairs of the factory located in the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation complex, an official said.

# Over 61% turnout in 6th phase of LS polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 25:** An estimated voter turnout of 61.46 per cent was recorded in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha election Saturday in 58 constituencies across six states and two Union territories, with the polling percentage in the Jangal Mahal region of West Bengal touching 79.78. Incidents of violence, including an alleged assault on a BJP candidate, minor clashes and protests were reported from West Bengal while there were instances of EVM malfunctioning at some places, including Delhi.

Jharkhand recorded a turnout of 63.76 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 54.03 per cent, Bihar 55.24 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir 54.46 per cent, Haryana 61.16 per cent, Odisha 70.23 and Delhi 57.82 per cent, according to the figures updated at 12:15 am by the EC on its voter turnout app.

The EC said polling percentage in the Anantnag-Rajouri seat in Jammu and Kashmir is the highest in 40 years.

The EC had directed election officials and state machineries to take adequate measures to manage the adverse impact of hot weather. Over 11.13 crore voters - 5.84 crore male, 5.29 crore female and 5120 third gender - were eligible to exercise their franchise in this phase. The Election Commission (EC) deployed around 11.4 lakh polling officials at 1.14 lakh polling stations.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti, who is contesting from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat in Jammu and Kashmir, staged a sit-in outside Bijbehara police



- Polling is now complete in 486 seats in 28 states and Union territories
- With large parts of India sweltering under a heatwave, arrangements for cold water, coolers, fans and tents were made at several polling stations
- The last of the seven phases of polling is scheduled June 1 and counting of votes will be taken up June 4
- Wheelchairs were also kept for the assistance of elderly voters

station on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway in Anantnag district against alleged detention of her party workers and polling agents. She also claimed outgoing calls on her mobile number were suspended.

In the national capital, President Droupadi Murmu, Union ministers S Jaishankar and Hardeep Singh Puri, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi minister Atishi and Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were among those who cast their votes. CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat alleged she had to wait for almost an hour to cast her vote as the battery of the EVM control unit at her polling booth "drained out". Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kejriwal and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge urged

voters to exercise their right to franchise in the penultimate phase of the Lok Sabha elections in large numbers.

In Haryana, BJP's Karnal Lok Sabha seat candidate Manohar Lal Khattar and Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, who is contesting the Karnal assembly by-poll, were among the first to cast their votes at their respective booths. In West Bengal, voting washed in the tribal belt Jangal Mahal region, spanning five districts. BJP's Jhargram candidate Pranat Tudu claimed his convoy was attacked in Garbeta area of Paschim Medinipur district, following which security personnel escorting him were injured and had to be hospitalised. Tudu also received injuries on his forehead, which needed medical attention.

## Man held for posing as female professor to rape tribal girls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sidhi, May 25:** A 30-year-old man has been arrested in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district for allegedly raping at least seven girls after posing as a woman college teacher and calling them in connection with scholarship funds, police said Saturday.

Most of the survivors belong to tribal communities. Brajesh Prajapati, the accused, used a voice-changing app to sound like a woman while talking to his potential victims on phone, police said. Three associates of Prajapati have also been arrested, said Rewa Range Inspector General (IG) Mahendra Singh Sikarwar.

Prajapati called girl students while posing as a woman college teacher from a collage at Tikari, and asked them to meet so that they could get a scholarship, the police official said. 'Her son' will take them to her house, the caller would tell the girls. After the crime, he would snatch away the girl's mobile phone.

During the probe, police learnt that the culprit had marks of burns and injuries on his hands, and finally nabbed him.

While Prajapati confessed to raping seven girls, four girls have come forward to lodge complaints, IG Sikarwar said.

The first case of rape, kidnapping, assault and robbery was registered May 16 following an incident of May 13. Two more cases were registered May 18 and May 23 over crimes that had taken place May 4 and May 20, respectively. Another FIR was registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act May 19 over a crime that had taken place April 15, police officials said.

## Pune car crash: Minor's grandfather arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pune, May 25:** Pune police Saturday arrested the grandfather of the 17-year-old involved in a car crash here that killed two persons while claiming that both the teenager's father and grandfather put pressure on the family's driver to take blame for accident by offering him money and giving threats.

"After the accident, the driver gave a statement at the Yerawada police station that he was at the wheel...But it was revealed that a teen was driving the car," police commissioner Amitesh Kumar told reporters.

After the driver left the Yerawada police station, the teenager's father, realtor Vishal Agarwal and his grandfather whisked him in a car to his house on the premises of their bungalow, confiscated his phone and confined him there, the senior police official said.

"He was pressured to give a statement to police as per their directions," Kumar said, adding that the driver was offered gifts and cash for owning up to the crash of the Porsche driven by the teenager, and also threatened.

The driver's wife reached the place the next day and freed him, said the commissioner.

"The driver was frightened. He was summoned and his statement was recorded Thursday (May 23). After corroboration of facts, an offence was registered against the juvenile's father and grandfather (on the driver's complaint)," Kumar said. Vishal Agarwal and his fa-



The teenager's grandfather was arrested for "illegal confinement" of the driver, and a court subsequently remanded him in police custody till May 28. The minor's father, in judicial custody in another case registered in connection with the May 19 accident, too was named in the First Information Report.

ther were booked under Indian Penal Code sections 365 (kidnapping) and 368 (wrongfully concealing or keeping in confinement).

The driver gave a statement to the police saying he was not driving the car when it knocked down two IT professionals on a motorbike in Kalyani Nagar area of the city in the early hours of May 19, the commissioner said.

The driver and his family will be provided police protection, Kumar added. While seeking custody of the teenager's grandfather in the sessions court Saturday, the prosecution said the police had recovered DVR (digital video recorder) of CCTV footage from the house of the accused, and the probe indicated that the footage was tampered with.

The court was also informed about past offences registered against the grandfather at police stations in Kondhwa, Bundgarden in Pune and another at Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra.

Parents of Anish Awadhya and Ashwini Koshta, the 24-year-old techies from Madhya Pradesh who were killed in the accident, had demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe in the case.

## SNIPPETS

### Tribal woman sells newborn due to poverty

**Agartala:** A tribal woman from Tripura's Dhalai district, grappling with dire poverty following her husband's death five months ago, sold her newborn for ₹5,000, an official said Saturday. The four-day-old girl was fortunately rescued from a couple in Hezamara, West Tripura district, and reunited with her mother, following opposition leader Jitendra Choudhury's intervention, sources said. Mormati Tripura (39) of Taraban Colony in Gandacherra subdivision, gave birth to a daughter at home Wednesday. The next day she sold the child to a couple in Hezamara for ₹5,000, citing extreme poverty after her husband's demise five months ago, sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Arindam Das said. "Already burdened with two sons and a daughter, she couldn't afford another child in the face of severe financial strain. This desperation likely led to the decision to sell the child. Upon receiving the alert, we swiftly retrieved the infant and reunited her with her mother the following day," Das added.

### 3 Naxalites killed in separate encounters

**Raipur/Bijapur:** Three Naxalites were killed in encounters with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar region Saturday, police said. Two Naxalites were gunned down in Bijapur district, while another was neutralised in neighbouring Sukma district, they said. In Bijapur, the gunfight occurred in a forest near Jappemarka-Kamkanar villages under the Mirtur police station limits, where a team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, an official said. In another encounter, a Naxalite was killed by the security forces on a forested hill near Belpochcha village in Sukma district, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan told PTI. Maoists have called for a bandh on May 26 in the Bastar region to protest against the alleged fake encounters.

### Judicial custody for Gupta brothers

**New Delhi:** South African businessmen Anil Kumar Gupta and Ajay Kumar Gupta, who were arrested by the police in Dehradun on charges of abetment of suicide of a prominent builder, were sent to judicial custody for 14 days Saturday. While sending the Gupta brothers to judicial custody, the SJM's court also sought a response from the police on the bail application moved by the accused. The Gupta brothers were arrested after Dehradun-based builder, Satinder Singh Sawhney, named them in a suicide note. The Gupta siblings' arrest stemmed from accusations made against them by Sawhney in this suicide note. Sawhney tragically ended his life by jumping from the terrace of a seven-story apartment complex Friday morning. Both Anil and Ajay Gupta were presented before the court Saturday for further legal action. Originally from UP's Saharanpur, the Gupta family gained infamy for their wide-ranging business activities in South Africa, where they faced allegations of widespread corruption. Some years back, the family became embroiled in a major political scandal in the country, which drew global attention due to its connection with President Jacob Zuma.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee participates in 'dandiya' dance during a roadshow in favour of TMC candidate from Barasat constituency Kakuli Ghosh Dastidar for Lok Sabha polls, in Kolkata

# 1 in 8 women at risk of developing thyroid disorder: Experts

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 25:** Highlighting the critical need for increased awareness about the importance of thyroid testing in infants, pregnant women, and those planning pregnancy, experts on World Thyroid Day Saturday said women are particularly at risk, with one in eight at risk of developing thyroid disorder in their lifetime.

World Thyroid Day is observed every year May 25 to increase awareness among the public about thyroid diseases and the need to keep the thyroid gland healthy to ensure a healthy life.

According to Dr Rajesh Rajput, Director, Endocrinology &

Diabetology, Medanta, Gurugram, the burden of thyroid disorders is significant in India.

"Alarming, one in every ten individuals has thyroid dysfunction and the majority of these cases are diagnosed in late stages. Most thyroid conditions are chronic, requiring lifelong medication, and they are ten times more prevalent in women than men," Rajput told IANS.

As per health experts, about 42 million people are believed to be suffering from thyroid disorders in India and the number of women affected by the disease is far greater compared to men. "Hypothyroidism" is more common in women.

"The level of thyroid hor-



mones in the blood needs to be normal so that all the systems of

our body can function normally. If there is a change in the level

Thyroid disorders can impact the overall well-being of people and adversely affect their health

Our neck has a thyroid gland that stimulates thyroid hormones, which play a pivotal role in regulating the metabolism of the body

of thyroid hormones, either the level becomes high or the level becomes low, both conditions have many effects on our body," said Dr Chandan Kumar Mishra, Senior Consultant, Endocrinology, Aakash Healthcare, Delhi.

The condition in which the level of hormones decreases is called hypothyroidism. It is mostly found in women aged 20

to 50 years, although it can happen in any age group, according to experts.

As per Dr. Praveen Gupta, Principal Director and Chief of Neurology at Fortis Hospital, Gurugram, thyroid disorders can significantly impact neurological health, leading to a range of complications that affect the nervous system.

According to experts, increasing awareness of the symptoms of thyroid is crucial. Doctors should educate people about the symptoms to ensure timely treatment. Increasing accessibility to thyroid testing and promoting regular check-ups can significantly reduce the incidence of undiagnosed cases.



NASA will soon provide advanced training to Indian astronauts, with the goal of mounting a joint effort to the International Space Station, hopefully, this year or shortly thereafter, which was one of the promises of our leaders' visit together

### DRONE WALL

Six countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will set up a "drone wall" to protect their borders, the Ukrainian news outlet European Pravda reported Saturday



### of the day quote

The Punjab Cabinet of Maryam Nawaz has approved legal action against Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) founder leader Imran Khan and his other party leaders for building hate-narrative against the state institutions

We take note of the order handed down to Israel. ICJ orders are binding on the Parties, and they have to be fully and effectively implemented

China's support for Moscow is a crucial factor in the Russian war against Ukraine

### SHORT TAKES

**Sharif to visit China next month**  
Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit China in the first week of next month to join the formal launching of the second phase of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, according to a media report Saturday. A source in the Prime Minister's Office told the Dawn newspaper that Prime Minister Sharif was scheduled to leave for China June 4, but the date of the visit could slightly be changed.

**B'desh prepares to face 'Remal' today**  
Dhaka: Bangladesh has readied nearly 4,000 shelters equipped with adequate dry food supplies and water as it prepares for severe cyclonic storm 'Remal' forecast to make landfall Sunday evening with a potential high tidal surge and heavy rainfall in the coastal districts of Satkhira and Cox's Bazar, media reports said Saturday. Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) is expected to issue a 'great danger' signal number 10 between 12 midnight and 1:00 am Sunday.

**Gold mine collapse leaves five dead**  
Nairobi: An illegal gold mine collapsed in northern Kenya, leaving at least five miners dead, police said Saturday. The collapse of the Hillo mine in the Dabel area near the Kenyan border with Ethiopia was attributed to a landslide Friday. Marsabit County Police Commander Patrick Mwakio said the miners died on the spot after the debris covered them. No other miners have been found and it was not clear if anyone else was missing in the collapse. Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki in March declared the area disturbed and banned mining activities after clashes over a mining dispute led to the deaths of seven people.

**Hundreds of shanties gutted**  
Dhaka: A devastating fire swept through a camp of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's southeastern Cox's Bazar district, destroying hundreds of shanties and leaving thousands of people homeless. Shafiqul Islam, station officer at local Ukhiya Fire Service and Civil Defence, told reporters that the fire started at refugee camp No. 13 and spread quickly to surrounding areas. Xinhua news agency reported. At least 230 shanties and 100 other facilities were gutted in the fire, he said, while over 200 other makeshift shelters were damaged.

## China ends military drills around Taiwan

A TOTAL OF 111 CHINESE AIRCRAFT AND DOZENS OF NAVAL VESSELS TOOK PART IN THE DRILLS OVER TWO DAYS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, May 25: The Chinese military has ended its two-day joint drills surrounding Taiwan, stated to be the biggest and closest exercises held around the prosperous self-ruled island that China claims to be part of its mainland.

The drills Thursday and Friday were held in retaliation to Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te's remarks rejecting Beijing's sovereignty claims over the island and tested the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) ability to seize power.

China views Taiwan as a rebel province that must be reunified with the mainland even by force. While there was no official announcement that the drills

ended, the Chinese social media WeChat account of the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command on Saturday said the exercises lasted two days from Thursday.

It said the exercises by land, navy, air force and missile forces were "punishment" for "Taiwan separatists" and a "severe warning" to outside forces intent on interference and provocation.

The drills, called Joint Sword-2024A, involved "advancing", "besieging", "blockading", "attacking", "destroying" and "cutting off", the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted the WeChat post.

Observers said the drills were the biggest and closest exercises ever held near Taiwan.

Lieutenant Colonel Zhang Chi, an associate professor at the



National Defence University of the PLA, told state broadcaster CCTV that such drills could become a new norm for the mainland, the Post reported.

State news agency Xinhua quoted Meng Xiangqing, from the same university, as saying the vessels involved in the exercises

were "unprecedentedly close to the coast of Taiwan".

Li Xi, the spokesperson for the Eastern Theatre Command of the PLA, said Friday that the combined forces of the army, navy, air force, and rocket forces continued joint drills surrounding Taiwan Island focussing on practising control and occupation of the area on the concluding day of the two-day drill.

Integrated operations inside and outside the island chain are being conducted to test the command's capabilities to jointly take control of the battlefield, and launch joint strikes to seize control of crucial areas, he said in a press release.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said Friday and Saturday, 62 PLA aircraft and 27 PLA Navy

vessels were detected.

It said 47 aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's southwestern, southeastern and eastern ADIZ.

Taiwanese Armed Forces have monitored the situation and employed CAP aircraft, navy vessels, and coastal missile systems in response to the detected activities, it said.

Military analysts say the PLA, which has been carrying out aggressive military exercises since the visit of the then US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August 2022, practised a possible takeover of the estranged island through military action at lightning speed.

According to Taiwanese politicians, Beijing may launch its offensive against Taipei in 2027.

### BLASPHEMY CHARGES

## Christian community in Pakistan attacked

REUTERS

Lahore, Pakistan, May 25: At least five members of a minority Christian community were rescued Saturday after a Muslim crowd attacked their settlement in eastern Pakistan, police and a community leader said.

The crowd, which accused the Christian group of blasphemy, hurled stones and bricks at the police, said Shariq Kamal, the police chief of Sargodha district.

A large contingent of police cordoned off the settlement, he said, adding that the crowd had been pushed back and five injured Christians had been taken to hospital.

At least one house and a small shoe factory was set on fire by protesters who had gathered after neighbours alleged that the Muslim holy book, the Koran, had been desecrated by a minority community member, according to a police spokesman and Akmal Bhatti, a Christian leader.

Videos posted on social media showed protesters looting items from burning properties. Others were seen throwing the items in a heap on fire in a street.

The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said the Christian community was "at grave risk to their lives at the hands of the charged mobs".

Blasphemy is a sensitive subject in conservative Muslim-majority Pakistan, where just an accusation can lead to a street lynching.

Human rights groups say Pakistan's harsh blasphemy laws are often misused to settle personal scores.

While blasphemy is punishable by death in Pakistan, no one has been executed by the state for it, though numerous accused have been lynched by outraged mobs.

A Muslim crowd attacked a Christian community in eastern Pakistan last year, vandalising several churches and setting scores of houses on fire after accusing two of its members of desecrating the Koran.

### ISRAEL-GAZA WAR

## Attacks intensify despite ICJ order

World Court told Israel to halt Rafah offensive | Israel has pressed on with its offensive in Gaza | Source says mediated talks to restart next week



REUTERS

Cairo, May 25: Israeli forces killed more than 30 people in new attacks in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian medics said Saturday, the day after judges at the top United Nations court ordered Israel to halt its offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

Though Israel pressed on with its offensive against the Palestinian militant group Hamas, mediated negotiations between the two sides are due to restart next week, an official with knowledge of the matter said.

The decision on talks was taken after the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency met the head of the CIA and the prime minister of Qatar, said the source, declining to be identified by name or nationality given the sensitivity of the matter.

"At the end of the meeting, it was decided that in the coming week negotiations will open based on new proposals led by the mediators, Egypt and Qatar and with active US involvement," the source said.

Hamas did not immediately comment on the status of talks.

After more than seven months of war in Gaza, the mediators have struggled to secure a breakthrough, with Israel seeking the release of hostages held by Hamas and Hamas seeking the release of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel and an end to the war.

Fighting has continued in Gaza despite the mediation and despite judges at the top United

Nations court ordering Israel Friday to immediately halt its military assault on Rafah, where it says it is trying to root out Hamas fighters. The International Court of Justice, or World Court, has no means to enforce its emergency ruling in case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide.

### FIGHTING IN GAZA

The Israeli military said it had carried out "operational activity in specific areas of Rafah" Friday, including killing militants, dismantling part of Hamas' tunnel system, and locating stashes of weapons.

Further north in the coastal territory, where the Israeli military says it is trying to prevent Hamas from reestablishing its hold, Palestinian medical workers reported Israeli airstrikes that they said killed at least 17 people. Hamas, which governs Gaza, and the smaller armed group Islamic Jihad said their fighters had fired anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs at Israeli troops in the north.

Residents and civil emergency services said Israeli tanks entered deep into the area of Jabalia, destroying dozens of houses, shops, and roads.

Palestinian medical teams were unable to reach the area, where they believed more people were killed.

Israel has said it is carrying out operations in Rafah, despite growing international opposition, to remove Hamas battalions holed up there. Some of its hostages are also being held there, it says.

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA LANDSLIDE

## Death toll reaches over 300

REUTERS

Sydney, May 25: More than 300 people and over 1,100 houses were buried by a massive landslide that levelled a remote village in northern Papua New Guinea, local media reported Saturday.

Hundreds are feared dead in the landslide that hit Kaokalam village in Enga Province, about 600 km northwest of capital Port Moresby, around 3 am Friday.

The landslide in the Pacific nation north of Australia buried more than 300 people and 1,182 houses, the Papua New Guinea Post Courier said, citing comments from a member of the country's parliament, Aimos Akem. Akem did not immediately respond to Reuters request for comment via social media.

More than six villages had been impacted by the landslide in the province's Multitaka region, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) said Saturday.

"Australia's High Commission in Port Moresby is in close contact with PNG authorities for



Papua New Guinea is a diverse, developing nation of mostly subsistence farmers with 800 languages. There are few roads outside the larger cities. With 10 million people, it is the most populous South Pacific nation after Australia, which is home to around 27 million

further assessments on the extent of the damage and casualties," a DFAT spokesperson said in a statement.

The Australian Broadcasting Corp reported Saturday that four bodies had been retrieved from the area after emergency teams reached the sparsely populated area, where the death toll is expected to rise.

The landslide has blocked highway access, making helicopters the only way to reach the area, the

broadcaster reported.

Social media footage posted by villager Ninga Role showed people clambering over rocks, uprooted trees and mounds of dirt searching for survivors. Women could be heard weeping in the background.

Prime Minister James Marape has said disaster officials, the Defence Force and the Department of Works and Highways were assisting with relief and recovery efforts.

### India Global Forum to spotlight UK-India ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 25: The annual India Global Forum (IGF) in London is set to spotlight UK-India strategic ties bridged between general elections in both countries next month, with a line up of senior ministers, entrepreneurs and analysts weighing up the future trajectory of bilateral ties under newly elected governments.

IGF London, confirmed this week to be held between June 24 and 28, will cover the full spectrum of the partnership including the course of the free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations.

The India-UK FTA talks began in January 2022 and are now stalled in the fourteenth round of talks as both countries stepped into their general election cycles this year.



Argentina's President Javier Milei, Vice-President Victoria Villarroel, and members of the cabinet arrive at the Cathedral for a Te Deum to celebrate the 214th anniversary of the May Revolution, which marked the beginning of the country's independence from Spain, in Buenos Aires, Argentina

### CHALLENGE FOR SUNAK

## Over 10K reach UK on small boats since January

REUTERS

London, May 25: More than 10,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Britain in small boats so far this year, updated government data showed Saturday, underlining a key challenge facing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak ahead of a July 4 national election.

The number of people landing on England's southern beaches after making the dangerous Channel crossing fell by a third in 2023, but the latest numbers on a government website showed 10,170 arrived between January and May 25, up from 7,395 over the same period last year.

Sunak, who announced the election date Wednesday, said

later this week that asylum seekers who come to Britain illegally would not be deported to Rwanda before the vote-casting doubt on one of his Conservative Party's flagship policies.

The plan has been bogged down by legal obstacles for more than two years, and the opposition Labour Party, which is about 20 points ahead in opinion polls and seen on track to end 14 years of Conservative rule, has promised to scrap the policy if it wins the election.

Labour's shadow immigration minister Stephen Kinnock said Sunak's government had not done enough to tackle the issue. "Because all the government's efforts are now fo-



cused on getting a few hundred people flown to Rwanda, they have lost sight of the thousands more who are crossing the Channel every month," Kinnock

said in a statement.

Labour has said if elected it would create a Border Security Command that would bring together staff from the police, the

### PM's 'unusual step'

London: After declaring a general election for July 4, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is reportedly spending his first Saturday with his closest advisers as he takes an "unusual step" of a day away from public events over the first weekend of the campaign. The 44-year-old Indian-origin leader is taking some private time out with his aides and family amid a mass exodus of senior members of Parliament from his embattled Conservative Party. Cabinet ministers Michael Gove and Andrea Leadsom became the latest Tory frontliners to announce their decision to not stand for re-election in this summer's polls, taking the number of party members quitting the race to as many as 78. According to sources quoted by the Guardian newspaper, Sunak is taking the "unusual step" of a day away from public events over the first weekend of the election campaign and instead will spend it in discussion on election strategy with his closest advisers. Strong challenges to incumbent Tories in constituencies around the country.



domestic intelligence agency and prosecutors to work with

international agencies to stop people smuggling.

## of the day quote

We are the third largest startup ecosystem in the world. And there are a couple of tailwinds going for us

**KUMARA RAGHAVAN** | HEAD (STARTUPS), AMAZON WEB SERVICES

The Indian economy is on a growth trajectory and the demand for workspaces is growing at a robust pace

**UMESH SAHAY** | FOUNDER & CEO, EFC (I)

FY24 has been a record year for Ashok Leyland. We have achieved an all-time high, whether it is in revenues, growth, EBITDA margins or profits, we have achieved an all-time high number

**DHEERAJ HINDUJA** | CHAIRMAN, ASHOK LEYLAND

## Q4 RESULTS

### Reliance Power sees ₹397cr loss

**New Delhi:** Reliance Power Ltd Saturday reported a consolidated loss of ₹397.66 crore during the March quarter, mainly on account of increased cost of fuel consumed. It had posted ₹321.79 crore profit in the year-ago period, the company said in an exchange filing. The company's total income, however, increased to ₹2,193.85 crore from ₹1,853.32 crore a year ago. Among expenses, its cost of fuel consumed increased to ₹953.67 crore during the quarter from ₹823.47 crore in the January-March period in 2022-23. For the full fiscal year, the company's losses widened to ₹2,068.38 crore from ₹470.77 crore loss in FY23.

### Bosch profit rises

**New Delhi:** Auto components maker Bosch reported a 41 per cent increase in consolidated net profit after tax ₹564 crore for the March quarter. The company reported a net profit of ₹399 crore in the year-ago period. Total income of the company rose to ₹4,459 crore for the period under review as compared with ₹4,199 crore in the same quarter of FY23, Bosch Ltd said in a regulatory filing. For the year ended March 31, 2024, the company reported a net profit of ₹2,490 crore as against ₹1,424 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal.



**WhatsApp exports your user data every night. Some people still think it is secure**  
**ELON MUSK** | CEO, TESLA AND SPACEX

## STARTUPS FUNDING THIS WEEK

About 24 Indian startups have raised around \$444 million in funding during this week, which include five growth-stage deals and 14 early-stage deals. Last week, about 26 early and growth-stage startups collectively secured around \$240 million in funding



# Record solar capacity addition

India adds record 10GW of solar capacity in Q1 2024, marking almost 400% YoY increase

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 25:** India achieved a milestone by adding over 10 GW of solar capacity in the first quarter (Q1) of 2024, marking the highest quarterly installation to date.

This figure represents an almost 400 per cent year-over-year (YoY) increase compared to the over 2 GW installed in Q1 2023, as per the recent Q1 2024 India Solar Market Update from Mercom India Research.

Quarter-over-quarter (QoQ) capacity additions also saw a dramatic surge of 414 per cent, rising from nearly 2 GW in Q4 2023.

In Q1 2024, India installed 9.7 GW of large-scale solar capacity, which included 1.8 GW from open access solar projects. This represents a 524 per cent QoQ in-



crease and a nearly 534 per cent YoY rise.

Priya Sanjay, Managing Director of Mercom India, said, "The surge in installations in Q1 2024 was driven by the commissioning of several delayed projects that had received extensions in previous quarters due to high module prices. Falling module prices and suspending the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) order enabled developers to import modules at lower costs, facilitating project completions."

Additionally, granting grid connectivity to projects previously stalled in the Great Indian Bustard habitat significantly contributed to the record-breaking installations.

**Rajasthan, Gujarat led the large-scale solar installations, contributing 38% and 35% of the capacity additions, respectively, while Madhya Pradesh followed with 8%**

## ROBUST SUPPLIES FROM NORTHERN STATES

# Wheat procurement exceeds FY24's total

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 25:** Wheat procurement for the 2024-25 marketing year has surpassed last year's total of 262.02 lakh tonne, boosted by strong contributions from the northern states of Punjab and Haryana, the government said Friday.

In a statement, the government said 262.48 lakh tonne of rabi (winter)-sown grain has already been purchased for the central pool, benefiting 22.31 lakh farmers, with a minimum support price outflow of ₹59,715 crore.

The major procuring states were Punjab with 124.26 lakh tonne, Haryana with 71.49 lakh tonne, Madhya Pradesh with 47.78 lakh tonne, Rajasthan with 9.66 lakh tonne and Uttar Pradesh with 9.07 lakh tonne.

Wheat procurement normally runs from April to March, but the Centre this year allowed states to make purchases based on crop arrivals. In most states, the procurement began in early March. The government has set a



wheat procurement target of 300-320 million tonne for the 2024-25 marketing year.

Rice procurement is also progressing smoothly, with 728.42 lakh tonne of paddy, equivalent to 489.15 lakh tonne of rice, procured directly from 98.26 lakh farmers at a minimum support price outflow of around ₹1,60,472 crore.

The combined stock of wheat and rice currently exceeds 600 lakh tonne in the central pool, the government said, putting the country in a comfortable position to meet its foodgrain requirements under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and other welfare schemes, as well as for market interventions.

■ By end of Q1, India's large-scale solar project pipeline stood at 143.3 GW

■ In Q1, India added 15.2 GW of new power capacity, with solar power accounting for 66% of these additions

"There is a substantial pipeline of large-scale projects scheduled for 2024, positioning India for a record-breaking year by a significant margin. Assuming stability in policy and supply chains, and if government agencies continue to auction projects and meet the set targets, India is poised to be among the top three solar markets globally," commented Raj Prabhu, CEO at Mercom Capital Group.

Rajasthan and Gujarat led the large-scale solar installations, contributing 38 per cent and 35 per cent of the capacity additions, respectively, while Madhya Pradesh followed with 8 per cent. As of March 2024, India's cumulative installed solar capacity reached 82 GW. Solar energy represented 18.5 per cent of India's total installed power capacity and 43 per cent of the total installed renewable energy capacity.

# Yellen says India and China hindering 'Pillar 1' tax deal

A collapse of the Pillar 1 negotiations could prompt the return of digital services taxes in some countries and reignite potential trade tensions

REUTERS

**Stresa, May 25:** US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Friday she is trying to save a part of the global corporate tax deal focused on highly profitable multinational firms, but India is refusing to engage on issues important to US interests.

Yellen told Reuters in an interview on the sidelines of a G7 finance leaders meeting in Italy that China also has been "all but absent" in the negotiations to finalize "Pillar 1" of the OECD corporate tax deal reached in principle in 2021 that involves 140 countries.

"We are actively engaged in this negotiation," to meet an end-June deadline for the deal, Yellen said. "We're committed to

## Peak power demand continues to rise

India's peak power demand hit the season's new high of 239.96 GW Friday, due to soaring mercury levels in various parts of the country, which compelled excessive use of cooling appliances like air conditioners and coolers. As per power ministry data, the peak power demand met or the highest supply in the day, was recorded at 239.96 GW Friday, which is the maximum so far in the summer season this year. On Thursday, it was 236.59 GW, while Wednesday, the peak power demand was at 235.06 GW, as per power ministry data. The all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023. The record is expected to be broken during this summer season.

portive infrastructure and policies have attracted numerous large-scale projects," she said. By the end of Q1 2024, India's large-scale solar project pipeline stood at 143.3 GW, with an additional 93.1 GW of projects tendered and pending auction. The average cost of large-scale solar projects fell by 7 per cent QoQ and 28 per cent YoY, significantly improving the projects' internal rate of return.

"The reduction in the average cost of large-scale solar projects is largely attributed to the falling prices of solar modules," added Priya Sanjay.

During the quarter, tenders totaling 30.7 GW were announced, up 122 per cent YoY and 92 per cent QoQ. Additionally, 25 GW of solar projects were auctioned, a 229 per cent QoQ increase and a 2,957 per cent YoY rise.



doing everything we possibly can to make it work."

Earlier Friday, Italian Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti told reporters that the Pillar 1 negotiations were set to fail, citing objections from the US, India and China.

The Pillar 1 negotiations are mainly aimed at reallocating the taxing right on US-based digital giants, allowing about \$200 billion of corporate profits to be taxed in the countries where the companies do business.

A second pillar of the tax deal, the 15% global minimum tax on corporate profits is separately being implemented by many countries, but the US Congress has not ratified it.

Yellen said there are two "red line" issues for the US in the talks, related to transfer pricing and the "Amount B" system for simplifying the calculation of transfer pricing.

While most countries support the US position on these issues, "we have a problem with India. India will not engage with us," she said.

A collapse of the Pillar 1 negotiations could prompt the return of digital services taxes in some countries and reignite potential trade tensions.

Prior to the 2021 initial deal, US trade authorities threatened 25% tariffs on more than \$2 billion worth of imports from Italy, Austria, Britain, France, Spain and Turkey, from cosmetics to handbags. These were put on hold after the countries agreed to suspend their digital taxes while details of the arrangement were worked out.

## I-T dept notifies cost inflation index for current fiscal

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 25:** The income tax department has notified the Cost Inflation Index for the current fiscal beginning April 2024, for calculating long-term capital gains arising from sale of immovable property, securities and jewellery.

The Cost Inflation Index (CII) is used by taxpayers to compute gains arising out of sale of capital assets after adjusting inflation.

The CII for financial year 2024-25, relevant to assessment year 2025-26, stood at 363, as per a notification of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

The CII number for last fiscal was 348 and for 2022-23 financial year it was 331.



Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said the CII reflects the inflation in the economy, which causes the prices of goods and services to increase over time. For the financial year 2023-24, the CII was set at 348.

The index for the following financial year, 2024-25, has been updated to 363, marking an increase of 15 points, which corresponds to an annual inflation rate of approximately 4.3 per cent.

"This is consistent with the retail inflation rate of 4.83 per cent recorded in April 2024. Taxpayers usually prefer a higher CII as it allows them to claim larger tax rebates," Mohan said.

AKM Global Partner-Tax Sandeep Sehgal said the index is useful to adjust the capital gains for inflation, so that the taxpayers are taxed on real appreciation of the assets and not the gains due to inflation.

"Taxpayers can use this to calculate gains for long-term capital assets sold during FY 24-25 and reduce the tax liability accordingly," Sehgal said.

CII is notified under the Income-tax Act, 1961 every year. It is popularly used to calculate "indexed cost of acquisition", while calculating capital gains at the time of sale of any capital asset.

Normally, an asset is required to be retained for more than 36 months (24 months for immovable property and unlisted shares, 12 months for listed securities) to qualify as 'long-term capital gains'.

# New govt will have \$25bn extra in kitty

REUTERS

**Mumbai, May 25:** India's incoming government will be greeted with a \$25 billion cheque from the central bank, giving it the option to either boost spending or narrow the fiscal deficit quicker, both of which will be cheered by investors.

On Wednesday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a record ₹2.11 trillion dividend transfer to the government, more than double New Delhi's and street estimates, leading to a decline in bond yields and a rise in equity markets.

The surplus fund can help the new government, which will take charge after the current elections, bring down its fiscal deficit by 0.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) or increase spending on infrastructure or "populist" stimulus, Citi Research's Samiran Chakraborty said.

"The bond markets would likely hope that the government follows the deficit reduction route, while the equity markets would likely prefer the government taking the expenditure increase one," said Chakraborty.

During the election campaigns, the opposition Congress promised annual cash hand-

## DELICIOUS DILEMMA



outs of ₹100,000 to poor women and unemployed youth. The party's star campaigner Rahul Gandhi also promised debt waiver for farmers.

But Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has avoided promising any new major welfare measures.

"Despite higher revenue from the RBI dividend, we doubt the government would opt for more populist expenditure in its budget, if the government is BJP-led," said Shreya Sodhani, an economist at Barclays. "The current government has not shown a disposition towards

**There is scope for a slight reduction in the targeted fiscal deficit for the current year. I expect the government to comfortably achieve the targeted fiscal deficit of 4.5% by 2025/26**

**ASHIMA GOYAL** | MEMBER, RBI MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE

populist spending even in an election year."

The BJP-led government resisted the temptation of spending trillions of rupees on schemes for the poor in its last budget before the election while

raising spending on infrastructure to ₹11.11 trillion, more than three times the sum spent in 2019.

## QUICKER FISCAL CONSOLIDATION

The new government will likely present the final budget in July, leaving the administration with only eight months to spend funds allocated to them.

Government spending has been slow so far in the year, with the start of elections from April. Tax collections, meanwhile, have been strong due to buoyancy in the economy.

India collected a record ₹2.10 trillion in goods and services taxes in April, the first month of the financial year, ensuring the government is on track to meet its planned fiscal goal of 5.1% of GDP this year.

This could mean the government will lean towards using the bumper dividend for fiscal consolidation.

India's fiscal deficit ballooned to 9.2% during the pandemic but the government has steadily brought this down. But bringing down the deficit by 130 basis points from 5.8% in 2023/24 was seen as challenging and dependent on one-off revenue from either privatisation or auction of telecom spectrum.

# RIL seeks CCI approval for Viacom18-Star India merger

In February, Walt Disney Co, Reliance Industries announced signing of binding pacts to merge their media operations in India to create a ₹70K-cr behemoth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 25:** Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-promoted Reliance Industries has sought approval from fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) for the \$8.5-billion merger of Viacom18 and Star India Pvt Ltd (SIPL).

"The proposed transaction aims to combine the entertainment businesses (along with certain other identified businesses) of Viacom18, part of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) group and SIPL, wholly-owned by The Walt Disney Company (TWDC). As a result of the transaction, SIPL, currently a wholly-owned entity of TWDC through its subsidiaries, will become a joint venture (JV) which will be jointly



held by RIL, Viacom18 and existing TWDC subsidiaries," a notice filed with the CCI said Friday.

The proposed transaction will not cause any appreciable adverse effect on competition in India, RIL said in the notice.

However, to facilitate the CCI's assessment, they have identified several key markets where horizontal overlaps were significant such as licensing of audio visual content rights, distribution of broadcast TV channels, provision of audio visual (AV) content, and supply of advertising space in India.

SIPL is engaged in a range of media activities, including TV broadcasting, motion pictures and operation of an OTT plat-

form. It is a wholly-owned entity of US-based The Walt Disney Company (TWDC).

Viacom18 is engaged in the business of broadcasting of television (TV) channels, operation of an over-the-top (OTT) platform, in India and worldwide. It is also engaged in the business of production and distribution of motion pictures.

In February this year, global media giant Walt Disney Co and Reliance Industries announced signing of binding pacts to merge their media operations in India to create a ₹70,000 crore (\$8.5 billion) behemoth.

After the successful completion of the deal, it would create the biggest firm in the Indian media and entertainment sector, with over 100 channels in several languages, two leading OTT platforms and a viewer base of 750 million across the country.

Reliance and its affiliates will hold 63.16 per cent stake in the combined entity, while Disney will have the remaining 36.84 per cent shareholding. Reliance has also agreed to invest around ₹11,500 crore into the joint venture to grow the OTT business.

THE COUNTRY ENDS SIXTH WITH BEST-EVER 17 MEDALS IN WORLD PARA ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

# India shine in World Para Athletics C'ships

CHINA ENDED ON TOP OF THE PILE WITH 87 MEDALS FOLLOWED BY BRAZIL, UZBEKISTAN, GREAT BRITAIN AND US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kobe (Japan), May 25:** India ended their World Para Athletics Championships campaign with unprecedented success, scooping 17 medals, including six gold, to take the sixth spot in the standings with Delhi sprinter Simran Sharma winning the country's sixth yellow metal here Saturday. Simran won the gold medal in women's 200m T12 event with a personal best time of 24.95 seconds on the final day of competitions. She shaved off around one-fifth of a second from her earlier personal best of 25.16 seconds to win the gold.

Darlenys De La Severino (25.08) of Dominica and Lorraine Gomes De Aguiar (25.40) won the silver and bronze respectively.

The T12 category is meant for athletes who have vision impairment. India finished with 17 medals (6 gold, 5 silver, 6 bronze) to be at sixth place in the standings. This is India's best-ever performance, having surpassed the earlier record medal haul of 10 medals (3 gold, 4 silver and 3 bronze) it won in the 2023 edition in Paris.

China ended on top of the pile with 87 medals (33 gold, 30 silver, 24 bronze). Brazil (19 gold, 12 silver, 11 bronze), Uzbekistan (7 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze), Great Britain (7 gold, 2 silver, 3 bronze) and United States (6 gold, 13 silver, 5 bronze) were at second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.

India's other five gold winners are Deepthi Jeevanji (women's 400m T20),

**Tokyo Paralympics performance is the best so far but the country will do better in Paris Paralympics this year**

SATYANARAYAN | HEAD COACH



Sachin Khilari (men's shot put F46), Sumit Antil (men's javelin F64), Thangavelu Mariyappan (men's high jump T63) and Ekta Bhyan (women's club throw F51).

Hailing from Burari village in Delhi, Simran was born prematurely with impaired vision which makes it difficult for her to see beyond 10m. She was kept in an incubator for seven months after her pre-term birth. But through sheer greed and determination, she rose to become a top para athlete of the country.

The 24-year-old Simran, who

was mocked by people during childhood for her vision impairment, had won a silver each in 100m and 200m at the Hangzhou Para Asian Games last year. Her pillar of support has been her husband and coach Gajendra Singh, who is with the Indian Army and hails from Ghaziabad.

Two other Indians also won a bronze each Saturday. Preethi Pal won a bronze in women's 100m T35 category, her second medal of the championships. She had earlier won bronze in 200m in the same category May 19.

Then, Navdeep Singh added another bronze medal in the men's javelin throw F41 cate-

gory with a season best performance of 42.82m.

Athletes who have co-ordination impairments compete in T35 category while the F41 event is meant for those with short stature.

Earlier, India were awarded the silver and bronze in men's javelin throw F46 event after winning a protest against second-place finisher Dinesh Priyantha Herath of Sri Lanka.

Rinku Hooda and Ajeet Singh Friday finished third and fourth respectively in the men's F46 javelin throw final but the result was put on hold after India lodged a protest that Herath was ineligible to compete in the category.

In para sports, athletes are

classified into groups with similar levels of physical ability to allow fair competition.

The F46 classification is for athletes with arm deficiency, impaired muscle power or impaired passive range of movement in arms, with athletes competing in a standing position.

"He (Herath) was not classified properly and did not belong to the F 46 category," said an official from the Paralympic Committee of India.

India got a favourable decision and Herath was disqualified. Rinku, who originally finished third with an effort of 62.77m, was upgraded to second while Ajeet (62.11m) was handed a bronze.

"We won the protest against the Sri Lankan, who had also won gold at the Tokyo Paralympics, that he should not have been eligible to compete," head coach Satyanarayan told PTL. "Now, Rinku is the silver winner from the original third and Ajeet was upgraded from fourth place to bronze."

Satyanarayan said the country's best ever performance here was on expected lines.

"The number of medals we won was more or less the same that we had targeted though we had aimed for 7 gold. Indian para athletics and para sports as a whole is growing. We have done better than the 2023 Paris edition which was the best performance then," he said.

India's first medal -- a gold in men's javelin 46 event -- in the World Para Athletics Championships was won by the legendary Devendra Jhajharia, who is currently the Paralympic Committee of India president, in the 2013 edition in Lyon, France.

India are being represented by 40 athletes, including eight women, in this championships.

## Compound archery team strike gold

For Jyothi, Parneet and world champion Aditi, this completed a hat-trick of World Cup gold medals together



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Yecheon (South Korea), May 25:** The Indian women's compound team of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Parneet Kaur and Aditi Swami grabbed its third successive Archery World Cup gold medal, while the mixed team added a silver at the stage two event here Saturday.

The world number one Indian compound team dominated Turkey's Hazal Burun, Ayse Bera Suzer and Begum Yuva right from the first end and sealed the gold without dropping a set, maintaining a healthy six-point margin (232-226) in a lopsided final.

For Jyothi, Parneet and world champion Aditi, this completed a hat-trick of World Cup gold medals together. They won the season-opening World Cup Stage 1 in Shanghai, beating Italy last month. They also ended with a gold at the stage four of the event in Paris in August last year.

"It's unbelievable, we are consistent in our performance, but during the matches we just focus on shooting our best, so that we can get a medal for our team," Aditi said about their consistency.

Asian Games champion Jyothi, however, failed to add a second gold to her kitty as she along with Priyansh squandered an opening round lead to go down to the USA's Olivia Dean and

Sawyer Sullivan by two points (155-153) in the compound mixed team final. In the compound women's team final, the second seeded Indians began with three X (arrow near to the centre) and dropped one point each in the next three arrows to edge out their fifth seeded rivals by one point in the first round.

In the next round of six arrows, the Indians showed complete supremacy, drilling in five perfect 10s with two X, and one 9 to stretch their lead by four points at the halfway mark.

Turkey fought hard in the penultimate round, shooting four 10s with one X to match India's score of 58. But that did not matter much as the Indians were ahead by four points going into the fourth and final end.

They sealed it by scoring yet another 58, which was studded with three 10s and one X. "I was just thinking to shoot my best. I wanted to give my best even for the last arrow," said Jyothi.

"We are feeling really great that we won the team gold medal here, and the weather was a little bit windy, but we managed to shoot our best," Parneet said.

In a battle between the world's top-two ranked nations in the compound mixed team final, the USA made a remarkable comeback to win the gold and maintain their supremacy.

## Women's hockey team suffer 2nd straight loss

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Antwerp (Belgium), May 25:** The Indian women's hockey team Saturday lost to Belgium 1-2 - its back-to-back defeat to the home side - as its European leg of the FIH Pro League further slipped.

The Indian women's team, under new coach Harendra Singh and captain Salima Tete, were beaten 0-2 by Belgium Thursday after opening its campaign with a 0-5 thrashing at the hands of Argentina Wednesday.

Belgium were ahead 2-0 at half-time with goals from Ballenghien Ambre (14th minute) and Blockmans Vanessa (20th). Both the Belgium goals came from penalty corners.

Belgium earned three penalty corners in the match while India got none. This was the Indian women's team's seventh defeat on the trot against Belgium in all international matches.

India will play against Argentina in their next match here Sunday.

## UNITED TRIUMPH IN MANCHESTER DERBY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, May 25:** Manchester United won the FA Cup after stunning defending champion Manchester City 2-1 in the final at Wembley Saturday.

United's first silverware of the season deprived crosstown rival City of the first back-to-back English league-cup doubles. United also qualified for the Europa League next season.

The final was a repeat of last year's which City won 2-1, and Pep Guardiola's team did not give up its trophy without a fight.

Alejandro Garnacho opened the scoring in the 30th minute after mistakes from City defender Josko Gvardiol and goalkeeper Stefan Ortega. Kobbie Mainoo then added a second goal in the 39th to spark passionate celebrations from manager Erik ten Hag, whose job was under intense scrutiny going into the final.

United was in control at half-



time but City piled the pressure on in the second half and eventually got back into the game through substitute Jeremy Doku's long range shot into the bottom corner in the 87th.

By that point Erling Haaland had hit the bar, Kyle Walker had forced goalkeeper Andre Onana into two outstretched saves, and substitute Julian Alvarez missed the target from close range with only the keeper to beat.

It is United's 13th FA Cup, one behind Arsenal's record of 14. And it is Ten Hag's second trophy in as many years at the club after winning the League Cup last year.

## Sindhu one step away from title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kuala Lumpur, May 25:** Double Olympic medalist P V Sindhu Saturday earned a shot at the \$420,000 Malaysia Masters crown after entering the women's singles final with a come-from-behind win over Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan here.

Fifth seed Sindhu, who last won the 2022 Singapore Open and finished runner-up at the Madrid Spain Masters in 2023, rallied to prevail 13-21 21-16 21-12 against world number 20 Busanan in a marathon semifinal that lasted 88 minutes to close in on the BWF World Tour Super 500 crown.

"There's one more match to go and when I win that maybe I'll be much more happier. But I think I'm happy that today it went out really well. These kinds of wins definitely gives me a lot of confidence," Sindhu said after the match.

"There were really long rallies. Losing the first game, the second



game was very important for me to maintain that lead. I didn't want to give her a lead as it would have been harder to cover. I think third game was important from the first point itself and maintaining that lead definitely made a difference," she said.

It was her 18th win over Busanan, who has beaten the Indian only once in her career way back in the 2019 Hong Kong Open.

"I am playing Busanan after a really long time. Definitely, her game has changed a lot and

even though we played a lot of times, it was a fresh match for me," Sindhu said.

"I did not go into the court with overconfidence. I just went thinking that I just need to give my best."

World No 15 Sindhu, who will be eyeing her third Olympic medal at the Paris Games, will face world No 7 Wang Zhi Yi of China in the summit clash.

Sindhu had lost to Wang at the Arctic Open last year but has defeated the Chinese twice in three meetings.

She seemed to have found her mojo back as she dished out some attacking badminton this week after looking out of sorts since making a comeback from a knee injury early this season.

It turned out to be a tough fight for Sindhu as she had to do the catching-up job, with Busanan dominating the proceedings in the opening game. It was a physical battle as the two tested each other in some high-quality long rallies.

## SHORT TAKES

### Bharali scripts history



**New Delhi:** Bedabrat Bharali Saturday became the first Indian man to win a gold medal in the Weightlifting Youth World Championships. At the tournament, held in Lima, Peru, 17-year-old Bharali lifted 136kg in snatch and 160kg in clean and jerk for a gold-medal winning total lift of 296kg in the men's 73kg event. Bharali's lift was 12kg more than what silver medalist Ryan McDonald of the United States lifted, and 13kg more than what Ukrainian Serhii Kotelevskiy managed. Sairaj Pardeshi won bronze in the snatch category in the men's 81kg category. However, Pardeshi missed out on an overall bronze medal by one kg, having lifted 300kg total compared to the 301kg lifted by bronze medal winner Dawid Liziak of Poland. India have won 15 medals so far in Lima including six gold, three silver and six bronze medals.

### Female officials debut in Copa America

**Buenos Aires:** Female match officials were appointed to work the Copa America for the first time. Maria Victoria Penso of the United States and Edina Alves of Brazil will be referees in the tournament. Both will be supported by assistants Neuzza Back of Brazil, Mary Blanco of Colombia, Migdalia Rodriguez of Venezuela, and Brooke Mayo and Kathryn Nesbitt of the US. Nicaragua's Tatiana Guzman was designated as a video review official. "It is a high commitment taken by CONMEBOL since 2016, betting on the development and professionalisation of more women on and off the field of play, promoting soccer with equality in different tournaments," the South American soccer body said.

## Gambhir's head versus Cummins' heart in high-stakes IPL final

WHILE ALL EYES ARE ON THE HIGH-PROFILE ENCOUNTER, CONCERNS REMAIN OVER CYCLONE REMAL BECOMING A SPOILSPORT IN THE PROCEEDINGS

AGENCIES

**Chennai, May 25:** Tactician par excellence Gautam Gambhir couldn't have envisaged a battle of brains with a more different kind of adversary than the smiling yet ruthless Pat Cummins as Kolkata Knight Riders face a spirited Sunrisers Hyderabad in a mega IPL final here Sunday.

Marquee sporting clashes always pit one leader against another but this IPL final will be about Gambhir's brain, which is always ticking against a captain who has transcended boundaries to turn into a leader of men.

Somewhere along the line, KKR's Shreyas Iyer, who is playing his second final as captain, has turned into bit of a side-show as a global cricketing royalty in Cummins faces an IPL czar in Gambhir.

A decade ago, no one would have placed a bet on Cummins being a captain and winning the ODI World Cup, World Test Championship and Ashes in a space of six months,

and now, leading SRH to their maiden IPL title would be the icing on the cake.

"A very practical guy, very humble, very empathetic to his fellow teammates and coaching staff. He is into the statistics and gets the information that he needs against a particular opposition in certain conditions," SRH assistant coach Simon Helmot described the skipper in a nutshell after the team's win against Rajasthan Royals in the second Qualifier.

"He doesn't waste time in (team) meetings. Our team meeting today was 35 seconds. But, a lot of information has already been spoken about," he said.

The two teams met in the first qualifier in which KKR outwitted SRH with clever bowling plans on a massive Motera ground and in Chennai, Iyer's men will again start as favourites.

The last time KKR played an IPL final in Chennai, it was against Chennai Super Kings in 2012 in one of the most epic



contests, which established Gambhir's credentials as an astute leader of men. He not only had the right game plan but also had his heart in the right place during those heady years.

Gambhir went on to win another title in 2014, which made him a sentimental favourite and now he is on the cusp of becoming the man, who as captain and mentor has won the

IPL trophy for the same team. Obviously a bigger perk in Indian head coach's assignment awaits Gambhir and a trophy would not only burnish his credentials but also raise the demand to have him in that Indian dressing.

If one looks at man-to-man comparison, KKR tick more boxes in terms of overall match-winners with Sunil Narine, Andre Russell, Rinku Singh, the

two Iyers -- Shreyas and Venkatesh -- the two Ranas -- Nitish and Harshit -- and spinner Varun Chakravarthy in their ranks. However, SRH's uncapped domestic stars like Abhishek Sharma, Nitish Reddy have done really well along with out-of-favour India internationals such as Bhuvneshwar Kumar; T Natarajan and Jaydev Unadkat.

SRH's 36-run win over Royals on a difficult track will certainly boost their confidence but they also must realise that the Chepauk wicket will be tailor made for Varun (20 wickets) and Narine (16 wickets), who have been in stellar form through the season.

SRH's spin department might be short on confidence but not in terms of heart as Abhishek and Shahbaz Ahmed showed during their cumulative haul of 5 for 37 in 8 overs, which changed the course of the second qualifier.

Any target between 180 to 200 could be a very competitive one

if the pressure of playing the final is also factored in.

Travis Head and Heinrich Klaasen did get runs on a tricky surface but the likes of Abhishek, Rahul Tripathi and Reddy would need to play the match of their lives for SRH to emerge triumphant. On a track where taking the pace off deliveries will be the key, young KKR pacers Harshit and Vaibhav Arora will have to think out of the box against Head, who has so far amassed 567 runs.

One interesting aspect of the IPL final is that the match features no member from India's main T20 World Cup squad. The only Indian player associated with the final will be Rinku Singh, who is in the reserves.

That again tells a story that IPL is won mostly by teams where 'Orange Cap' or 'Purple Cap' doesn't get much precedence in the face of team culture developed by Gambhir and Cummins.

KKR VS SRH