

**Seeking privacy**  
Actor Janhvi Kapoor says she is not okay with her wedding rumours being spread by the paparazzi  
LEISURE | P2

**Historic day**  
Spain, Norway, and Ireland formally recognise the State of Palestine Tuesday  
INTERNATIONAL | P10

**Big Tech lobby**  
A US lobby group representing tech giants Google, Amazon and Apple asks India to rethink its proposed EU-like competition law  
BUSINESS | P11

**Shocking defeat**  
India's doubles players Swatik Sairaj and Chirag Shetty suffer a shocking defeat in the first round of the Singapore Open  
SPORTS | P12

## Sacrificing Naveen

The truth seems to be finally out. On the fag-end of the ongoing elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi obliquely admitted that his camaraderie with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik didn't fructify into an alliance between the BJP and BJD due to electoral compulsions. He however, sought to mask it by saying it was a 'sacrifice' aimed at the 'welfare of Odisha'. He was quick to add that in politics, relations between leaders should be good. Needless to say 'everything is fair in love and war', and politics is no exception



Assembly elections in the state.

As the Lok Sabha elections enter its final phase, the PM is confident of his party returning to power at the Centre, and forming a government in Odisha. He however, said in politics, relations between leaders should be good. "We have good relations with the leaders of all the political parties of India, and in a democracy, we do not have enmity. Now the question is whether I should maintain my relations or worry about the fate of Odisha. I chose to devote myself to the bright future of Odisha and if I have to sacrifice my relations for that, I will sacrifice them and after the elections, I will convince everyone that I have no enmity with

anyone," he said. The PM went on to add that after the elections, he will convince everyone that he harbours no enmity with anyone. Modi also sought to launch a scathing attack on the Naveen-led state government by saying that a coterie has taken over the entire system in Odisha which has come on the way of the state's growth. Modi also invoked the Odia Ashmita (self pride) issue and said, "It is a question of the authenticity of Odisha. Odisha has so many natural resources. It is sad to see the poor people of such a prosperous state. Odisha is among the prosperous states of India. It is bestowed with such natural resources, but it is also in the list of states with many poor people. The government is responsible for this. That is why the people of Odisha should get their rights. Odisha should get its identity," he added. Patnaik, who has been in power as the chief minister since 2000, is seeking a record sixth term in simultaneous state elections. He claimed that a BJP Chief Minister will take oath in Odisha June 10.



**STORM AFTERMATH:** Rescue work underway after a stone quarry collapsed amid heavy rain in Mizoram's Aizawl district, Tuesday. At least 25 people, including 14 in the collapsed stone quarry, were killed in the state due to landslides and incessant rain in the aftermath of cyclone 'Remal' (Report P3)

**New Delhi, May 28:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday said he decided to 'sacrifice' his good relations with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for 'the welfare of Odisha'. He said this during an interview with news agency ANI while responding to a question over the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) decision to not ally with the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) - despite him sharing a good relationship with Patnaik - for the simultaneous Lok Sabha and

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

Yes, I know it's atrocious. I didn't write it. He gave that speech

## EC suspends Kutey



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** With three more days to go for the final phase of polling in Odisha June 1, the Election Commission of India (ECI) Tuesday suspended IPS officer DS Kutey and ordered medical examination of another police service officer Asish Singh, who is on leave. In a letter to the CEO, Odisha, the ECI said that 1997 batch IPS officer DS Kutey, who is presently working as the Special Secretary to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), be placed under suspension on the charge of "interfering" in the conduct of election. During the suspension period, Kutey's headquarters is fixed at the office of Resident Commissioner, Odisha in New Delhi where he has been asked to report by 3 pm, Wednesday, according to the letter. In the case of Asish Singh, an IPS officer of 2010 batch,



presently working as IG (CM security), being on medical leave since May 4, be present himself for detailed examination by a special medical board constituted by Director AIIMS Bhubaneswar, not later than May 30, 2024.

The ECI also asked the CEO to coordinate and ensure that the Director, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar constitutes the board to ascertain the illness and treatment of Singh. The report on the medical examination should reach the Commission by May 31, 2024, the ECI said. This apart, the ECI also directed the expeditious investigation under due process of law in the case against BJP's MLA candidate Prashanta Jagadev for damaging EVM in a polling booth. Jagadev was arrested May 26 on the charge of damaging the EVM during the third phase of polling in the state May 25.

## BJP to win over 75 Assly seats: Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhadrak/Jajpur, May 28:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah Tuesday asserted that Naveen Patnaik will become former CM of Odisha after June 4, exuding confidence about the BJP forming the next government in the state by securing more than 75 seats in the 147-member Assembly. Shah, addressing back-to-back election rallies in Bhadrak and Jajpur, held Patnaik responsible for the "poverty" in the state despite it being rich in natural resources. He also claimed that the saffron party is set to win 17 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats. The Lok Sabha and Assembly elections are being held simultaneously in the eastern state. "Come June 4, and Naveen babu will no longer remain the CM, he will become the former CM... BJP is set to win 17 Lok Sabha seats and 75 Assembly constituencies in Odisha," he said. "Naveen babu has failed to usher in change in the state, and he is responsible for the prevailing poverty here," Shah said, adding, the last 25 years of BJP rule were "lost years" for Odisha. The Home Minister said the BJP will ensure that the next CM is fluent in Odia, and understands the state's language, culture and tradition. "Should a 'Tamil babu' run the government from behind the scene... By casting your vote in favour of the lotus symbol, bring a 'jan sevak' to rule the state in place of an officer," he said, in an apparent reference to Patnaik's close aide and BJD leader VK Pandian. Stating that lakhs of youths were migrating to other states in search of work, Shah said, "Once the BJP forms government in Odisha, we will set up industries so that youths don't have to look for jobs elsewhere." He also hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for providing free 5kg of rice to the people of Odisha, and criticised Patnaik for distributing the rice in jute bags with his photographs.



## BJP tall claims failed in other states too: Naveen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Hours after Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed that Naveen Patnaik would become a former chief minister after counting of votes June 4, the ruling BJD president on Tuesday said that the saffron party will meet the same electoral fate as in Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh. Patnaik in a video message said: "The Bhartiya Janata Party said they will form government in Karnataka, they failed. They also said the same for Telangana and failed. They said the same in Himachal Pradesh and also failed." "I am certain that their same reputation will continue in these elections in Odisha," Patnaik, a five-time chief minister of Odisha said. Earlier, Shah at three back-to-back election rallies had claimed that Patnaik would become a former Chief Minister after counting of votes, June 4, and the BJP is all set to form the government in Odisha by securing more than 75 of the 147 seats in the state. Shah also claimed that the saffron party candidates will win in 17 of the state's 21 Lok Sabha seats. Stating that senior BJP leaders such as chief ministers and cabinet ministers are visiting Odisha as guests, Patnaik said, "We expect them not to use poor language and make false allegations. This is not appreciated by the people of our state." Patnaik also said that he prays to Lord Jagannath that better sense prevails with BJP leaders. It is worth mentioning that the exchange of barbs between top leaders of BJD and BJP has become more caustic with the elections coming to a close. Earlier this month, PM Modi had dared Naveen to name Odisha's districts and their respective 'capitals' without reading them from papers. Naveen took no time to respond with equal vigour by saying that the PM had 'actually forgotten' Odisha over the years.



## Man held for duping people of ₹50 crore

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha Police Tuesday arrested a person for allegedly duping people of Rs 50 crore on the pretext of high returns from investment in various schemes of a firm. Sleuths of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) apprehended the managing director of the firm, which defrauded around 2,000 investors, from Chandbali in Bhadrak district. The accused, identified as Mohan Kumar Parida, has been booked under various sections of the Odisha Protection of Interests of Depositors (OPID) Act and the IPC, a senior officer said. During the 2020-2023, the accused floated two schemes and promised around 26 per cent return per month on invested amounts, he said, adding that the firm was offering a two per cent bonus for enrolling new members. P4

## Defamation: Spat over summons to Atishi

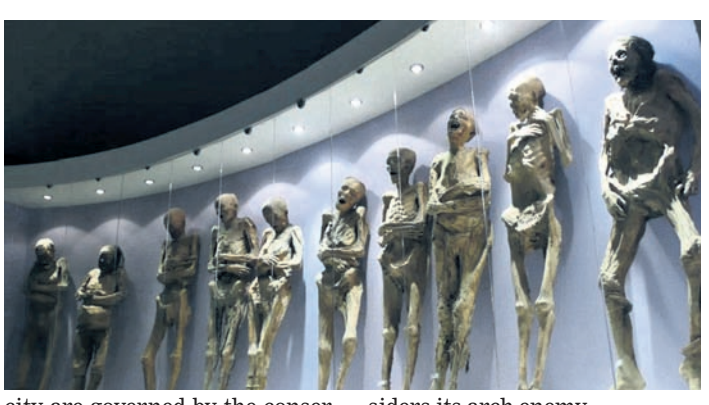
**New Delhi:** A war of words erupted between AAP and BJP Tuesday after a city court summoned Delhi minister Atishi in a defamation case May 29 over her poaching charge against the saffron party, with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleging there was a plan to arrest her. The BJP hit back at Kejriwal and Atishi, claiming their "lies" will be exposed in the court. A defiant Atishi said in a press conference that "Operation Lotus" was a well-known tactic of the BJP and questioned how the party managed to form governments in many states without having a majority. The Rouse Avenue court earlier in the day summoned Atishi Wednesday in connection with the criminal defamation case filed by Delhi BJP leader Praveen Shankar Kapoor. However, it refused to summon the Delhi chief minister in the matter. P9

## Mexico's famed mummy's arm comes off

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Mexico City, May 28:** Mexico's federal archaeology agency has accused the conservative-governed city of Guanajuato of mistreating one of the country's famous mummified 19th century bodies. The National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) said that during recent renovations at the museum where the mummified bodies are on permanent display, the arm of one of the mummies, well, came off. One might think the complaint is all about the dignified treatment of corpses buried around the early 1800s and dug up start-

ing in the 1860s, because their families could no longer pay burial fees. But in fact, the mummies have been on a somewhat grisly display in glass cases in a museum in Guanajuato, the capital of the state of the same name, and toted around to tourism fairs for decades. Some were exhibited in the United States in 2009. What appears to be at the root of the latest dispute is a turf battle between the INAH, which believes it has jurisdiction over the mummies because it says they are "national patrimony," and Guanajuato, which considers them a tourist attraction. The state and



city are governed by the conservative National Action Party, which the Morena party - which holds power at the federal level - considers its arch enemy. On Monday, the institute said it would demand an accounting of what permits and procedures were

followed during the museum renovations. "These events confirm that the way the museum's collection was moved is not the correct one, and that far from applying proper corrective and conservation strategies, the actions carried out resulted in damages, not only to this body," the institute wrote in a statement. It did not say what, if any, other bits of mummies had fallen off. "It appears that this situation is related to a lack of knowledge about proper protocols and the lack of training of the personnel in charge of carrying out these tasks," it continued.

**Featherlite by PGL Furnitures**

SLEEK, STYLISH & MODERN WORKSPACE

Experience Center: 2nd & 3rd Floor, PGL Honda Building, Fire Station Square, Baramunda, Bhubaneswar

CALL NOW 77357 30250



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
Of late you have been very preoccupied with work and social life. It is about time you gave yourself a break to indulge in something for your own benefit. Your health could be a cause of concern. Ganesh advises you to put everything else on the back-burner if you are feeling stressed out.

**TAURUS**  
This day you are likely to make wasteful expenditure. You will be more reckless, extravagant than you can afford to be. Your expenses are sure to outweigh your income. Be as tightfisted as you can. Not buying anything unnecessary or too costly can help control losses, points out Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
You will meet all kinds of people in matters related to work. You will need to understand their demands and needs and will have to strive to fulfill them. Your courteous nature will endear you to people. You will receive praise for your intelligence as well, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
People will surround you. You will entertain them with your hilarity. Social contacts will benefit you. Students will excel and concentrate on their work. It will be a good day, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
You may experience some tension trying to stay ahead of your busy schedule. You will need to maintain your mental and physical health. Important meetings will conclude successfully, but they may leave you fatigued at the end of the day. Find ways to unwind, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
You will find your banal day-to-day routine work to be very irritating today, says Ganesh. Avoid the tendency to exaggerate things out of proportion. You will not, however, let anything impact on your enthusiasm to work. You will do something novel to win the appreciation of people.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will stay in accordance with your prestige or social status. Your innovative ideas will help you progress in your work field. Now is a good time to put into completion those ideas, which had taken a back seat. Ganesh wishes you a day full of joy and happiness ahead.

**SCORPIO**  
It's business time and shock your competitors with the launch of the new product. However, stars are not aligned in a favourable way, which indicates that you may come across some hurdles. Take your time, sort out the troubles and go ahead with your launch with much fanfare and celebrations.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Dark and gloomy, that's what how you feel today, foresees Ganesh. However, the cloud to worries is likely to burst during the latter half of the day. Good news from abroad or a phone call from a friend is likely to cheer you up.

**CAPRICORN**  
For you everything is fair in love and war, and you utilise every possible means to achieve your targets. You have a strong sixth sense and it will direct you while making the right decisions, feels Ganesh. You are a soft hearted person and it makes you sad to see others in sadness and trouble. Instinctively, you will help those in need.

**AQUARIUS**  
You are good with words and with the art of eloquence you manage to get through any situation. Today, thanks to your communication skills, you will be able to crack important deals and make people follow your vision.

**PISCES**  
You will delay taking important decisions in the office or regarding business. You will take your time to come to a conclusion and put in all the required thought and this will grant you clarity on all the issues at hand. While this will be great for you, Ganesh advises you not to make hasty decisions regarding your personal life.



## KOURTNEY OPENS UP ON HER IVF STRUGGLES

American socialite Kourtney Kardashian has revealed that she suffered five failed IVF cycles. "I stopped after a year of trying (5 failed IVF cycles, 3 retrievals) my body relaxed and I believed in God's plan for my life," she said during a Q and A with fans on Instagram.

## RARE DYLAN PAINTING FETCHES NEARLY \$200K

A rare abstract painting created by legendary singer Bob Dylan over 50 years ago recently sold for a huge sum. The artwork from circa 1968 by the rock icon sold for \$196,156 at auction, reports *People* magazine.



## Malaika grabs attention for different 'act'

**Mumbai:** Malaika Arora is widely recognised as one of the fittest actresses in Hindi film industry. Her dedication to fitness is evident in her frequent gym appearances and rigorous workout routines. Every time she steps out in her stylish gym attire or shares glimpses from her intense training sessions, it captures the attention of fans and fitness enthusiasts alike, quickly going viral on social media.

On Tuesday, a video of Malaika surfaced, showcasing a different side of the actress.

It captures her picking up garbage on the road while on her way to the gym, a routine she follows daily. Upon noticing some trash lying at the gate, Malaika took immediate action. She first gathered the scattered garbage using her feet and then picked it up with her hands, disposing of it properly in a dustbin.

Malaika was captured by the paparazzi during an impromptu cleaning campaign. While heading into the gym, she greeted the photographers with a friendly hello. This video quickly caught attention, with many fans praising her actions, noting that she inspires not only through her fitness but also her commitment to cleanliness.

However, she faced criticism as well, with



some accusing her of staging the act for the cameras. Trolls flooded the comments, with one user writing, "Roll camera, action," and another claiming, "Malaika knows the camera is on."

## Janhvi not OK with marriage rumours

**Mumbai:** A few days ago, a social media post alleged that Janhvi Kapoor is going to get married soon. Speaking to an

entertainment

portal, the actress addressed the issue.

During a rapid fire round, when asked the duo about the strangest rumour Janhvi said, "I read something very stupid just recently where they said that I have confirmed some relationship aur 'meri shadi aise hone wali hai'. People mixed up some 2-3 articles saying I'm getting married. They are getting me married in a week which I'm not okay with (laughs). I want to work at the moment."

The actress is rumoured to be dating Shikhar Pahariya and while she was seen flaunting his name on her neckpiece recently.

However, the actress has preferred to keep her private life private.

She has not yet confirmed her relationship directly or spoken about it in the media.

At the moment, all her focus remains work. Her next film *Mr. & Mrs. Mahi* is set to release May 31.



## 'Faced serious racism in US'

**Mumbai:** Actor Akshay Oberoi has opened up about his upbringing in the US and the cultural challenges he faced there.

Akshay, who is all geared up for the release of his upcoming courtroom drama *Illegal 3*, was born in New Jersey, US. He pursued Theater Arts and Economics at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. During a candid conversation, Akshay shared the difficulties he encountered while growing up in the US. The actor said: "I grew up in America facing cultural challenges. My home was very desi, so our lifestyle, food, and everything were pretty similar to how it is here. When I was 10-12 years old, I wanted to be an actor."

"There was no chance for me to succeed there, as we used to face serious racism in the industry. It is the same now as well, but I had mentally prepared myself that I had to come here and pursue my dreams, as I have always been a big fan of Bollywood," added Akshay, who was last seen in the movie *Fighter*.

After moving to India, Akshay performed in plays at the Prithvi Theatre and received training from Kishore Namit Kapoor.

Meanwhile, *Illegal-Season 3* also stars Neha Sharma, Piyush Mishra, Ira Dubey, and Satyadeep Misra. It will be streaming from May 29 on Jio Cinema Premium.



## We have our own vocabulary in cinema: Payal

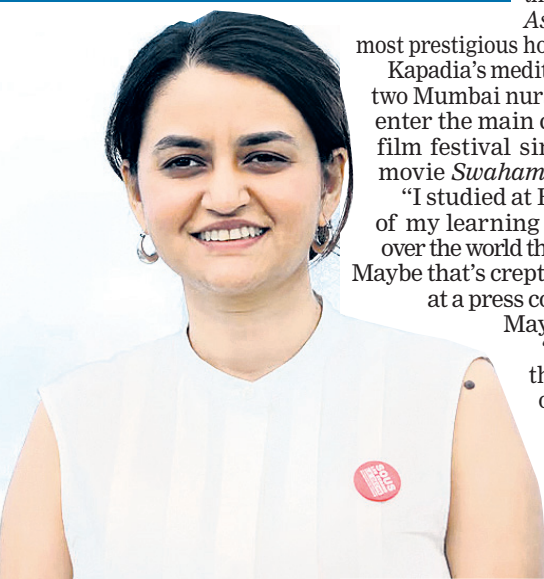
**New Delhi:** The beauty of cinema is that all kinds of films can and should co-exist, says Cannes Grand Prix winner Payal Kapadia, who credits her exposure to films from across the world as a major part of her learning years at Pune's FTII.

Kapadia etched her name in history by becoming the first director from India to clinch the coveted trophy for her film *All We Imagine As Light*, the European film gala's second most prestigious honour after the top prize Palme d'Or.

Kapadia's meditative film in Malayalam and Hindi about two Mumbai nurses was also the first film in 30 years to enter the main competition section of the prestigious film festival since Shaji N Karun's 1994 Malayalam movie *Swaham*.

"I studied at FTII and it was a really important part of my learning of cinema. We watched films from all over the world there, we studied cinema from everywhere. Maybe that's crept into how I like to make films," she said at a press conference in Cannes after the win at the May 14-25 event.

"Maybe that then becomes a language that the western audience can be more open to because I think we have our own vocabulary in cinema and it's very self-contained in India," Kapadia said while reflecting on the film's universal appeal.



## BIDYAKANAK'S 5-DAY NAT'L THEATRE FEST CONCLUDES



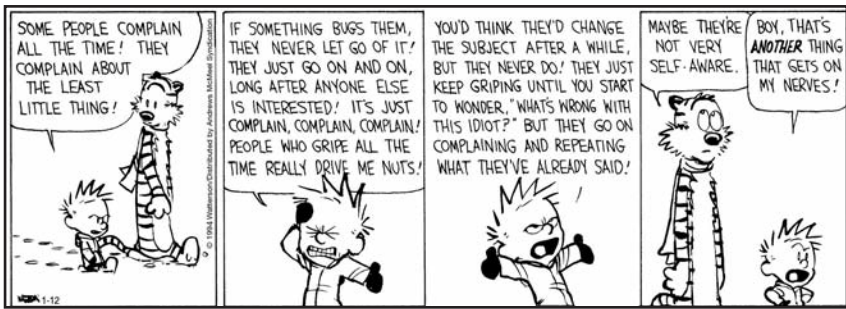
Mumbai-based Ekrang theatre troupe performed Hindi play *Nata Samrat* Tuesday at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar. Adapted from Bishnuwaman Shirvadikar's Marathi work by Sachidananda Joshi into Hindi, the drama was directed by Jayant Deshmukh. Additional Chief Secretary, Govt. of Odisha, Satyabrat Sahu, Special Secretary Masdhusudan Das, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi vice-president Manmath Satpathy and dramatists Shaileshwar Nanda, Lalatendu Rath, Mihir Meher and Subodh Pattnaik were among the luminaries present on the occasion.

## FUN post

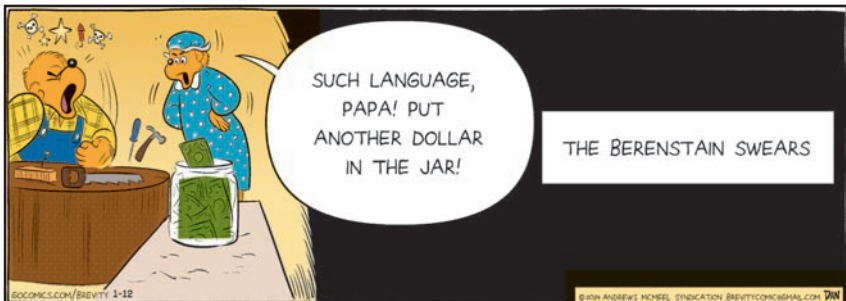
### PEANUTS



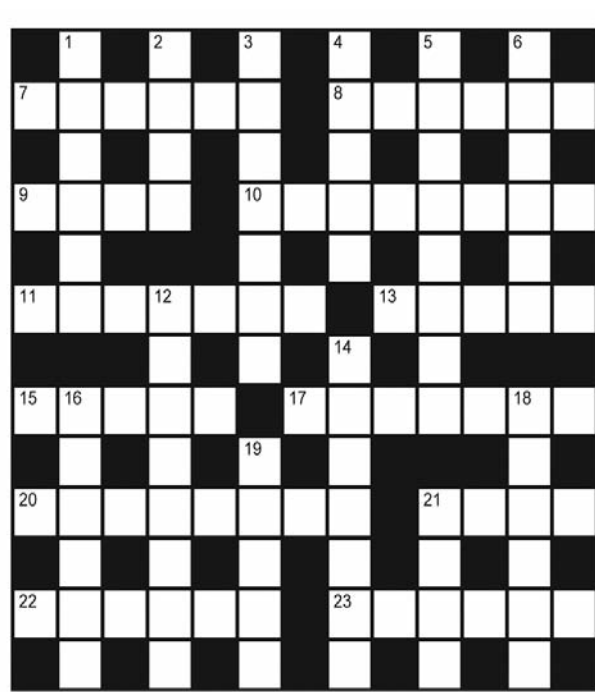
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



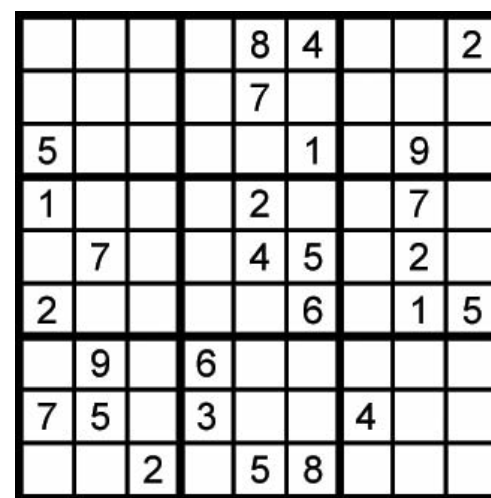
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Brazilian port
  - 8 Flag or banner
  - 9 Very dry, as wine
  - 10 Extroverted
  - 11 Template, of sorts
  - 13 Air freshener option
  - 15 Blacksmith's block
  - 17 Mountain sheep
  - 20 Thick dark syrup
  - 21 Delicate fabric
  - 22 Platitude
  - 23 Smooth, in music
  - Down**
  - 1 Clandestine
  - 2 Help for the stumped
  - 3 Type of exercise
  - 4 Breakwater
  - 5 Fill with wonder
  - 6 Schedule
  - 12 Irritation
  - 14 Minced meat dish
  - 16 Lonely pasta piece?
  - 18 Enumerate
  - 19 Michaelmas daisy
  - 21 Racing sled

### 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

## City AIIMS lacks fire safety cert

DEBASISH PANIGRAHI, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Even as inadequate fire escape infra and lapsed safety compliance certificate are said to be among the reasons behind the death of seven newborns in a tragic hospital fire in Vivek Vihar area of New Delhi Saturday, Odisha's premier healthcare facility, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar is learnt to have been functioning for nearly a decade now without a fire safety compliance certificate.

A top source in the Fire Services department told Orissa POST that authorities at the 978-bed super specialty hospital have been briefed about the same and asked to introduce adequate fire safety measures at the earliest so as to avoid any kind of mishap.

The disclosures assume special significance in view of the fact that the hospital is visited by thousands of patients and their relatives not only from Odisha but also from neighbouring states every day, and any kind of fire mishap would mean high number of injuries and casualties.

The City has already witnessed a devastating hospital fire in 2016 where around two dozen people had died and over 120 injured in what came as a wakeup call for healthcare facilities to look into the critical aspect of safety of patients, other than providing care and treatment.

Sources said though the Fire Services department has set up



a dedicated fire station on the premises of AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, the hospital building infra is yet to have sanctioned fire safety norms in place. "This may render emergency response and patient evacuations difficult despite the presence of the fire tender," sources added.

When contacted, Fire Services director general (DG) Sudhanshu Sarangi confirmed about the lapses on part of the AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, and said, "We've told them about it, and they will be doing the needful soon."

An AIIMS-Bhubaneswar

**The audit is being conducted across Odisha and our district offices would be submitting reports to the respective CDMOs, Thursday. The CDMOs will be seeking compliance from the establishments**

SUDHANSHU SARANGI | FIRE SERVICES DG

spokesperson said though the hospital has fire NoC, "We are upgrading our infra to become fully compliant as per set fire standards."

Sources said the three top government healthcare facilities in the state—SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, MKCG Medical College and

Hospital in Berhampur and VSS Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) in Sambalpur—also have fire stations on their premises, while efforts are on to refurbish fire safety standards at these 'old establishments'.

Most of the super specialty private hospitals in the City have become fire safety compliant in the aftermath of the 2016 fire, sources added.

However, compliance in case of medium and small clinical establishments in the state remain unclear, they said.

Asked about the same, Sarangi said, the Fire Services department has already identified the safety at clinical establishments as its top priority area and launched an audit of all such places a fortnight back (much before the Delhi fire, or Rajkot gaming zone fire cases).

"The audit is being conducted across Odisha and our district offices would be submitting reports to the respective CDMOs, Thursday. The CDMOs will be seeking compliance from the establishments," he said. On Friday, the DG is scheduled to make a presentation on the issue before the Chief Secretary.

Sources meanwhile said of the 4,300-odd clinical establishments that are being audited, focus is laid on O&G and neonatal as well as paediatric clinics/hospitals which are often found to have scant, or minimal fire safety measures though their patients are the most vulnerable to any mishap, fire included.

As per norms, any clinical establishment having 15 metres or above structure needs to have mandatory fire compliance certificate for its operation.

### CEO MOVED

A BJD delegation comprising MPs Sasmit Patra and Sulata Deo after submitting memorandum to CEO in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, alleging attack on party workers by BJP leaders



### POLITICKLE by MANJUL

POLITICKLE by MANJUL

@MANJULtoons



### 420 offensive social media posts removed

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Continuing its crackdown against offensive social media content ahead of Phase IV elections in the state, the social media cell of Odisha Police Tuesday claimed the removal of 420 posts from platforms like Meta, Instagram, YouTube and X.

Besides, five FIRs have been registered with the social media cell of Odisha Police and are currently being in-

vestigated. The Odisha Police claimed that these posts were taken down following the reports of violation of model code of conduct.

In order to tackle the inflammatory or hateful content, the social media unit of the Crime Branch in the past had sent 788 requests for content takedown to Meta. In response, the Meta has acted upon 154 of these requests.

The CB had earlier sent requests to Instagram for removal

of 471 posts, while requests were made to YouTube to take down 96 videos.

Likewise, search giant Google has cooperated with the requests from CB by removing nine pieces of content, which were deemed inappropriate or harmful.

Various social media cells of Odisha Police have stated that around 950 social media handles are under surveillance as they might disrupt the law and order situation with 'hateful content'.

## 25 dead as rain, landslides wreak havoc in Mizoram

AGENCIES

**Aizawl, May 28:** At least 25 people, including 14 in a stone quarry collapse, were killed in Mizoram Tuesday due to landslides and incessant rain in the aftermath of cyclone Remal, state disaster management authority said.

Several other people went missing in landslides, mostly in the state capital region, which was cut off from the rest of the country for several hours during the day and bore the brunt of the natural calamities.

In a massive landslide, at least 14 people, including two minors, were killed and around eight others were missing as a stone quarry collapsed in Aizawl district, the Mizoram State Disaster Management Authority (MSDMA) said.

Four persons were also killed and 18 others injured in separate incidents in Assam on Tuesday as heavy rain accompanied by strong wind lashed the state in the aftermath of the cyclone.

In Nagaland, four deaths and damage to more than 40 houses were reported while two persons died and over 500 others were injured as downpours wreaked havoc in Meghalaya.

The stone quarry collapse incident in Mizoram happened around 6 am in an area between Melthum and Hlimen on the southern outskirts of the Aizawl town, an official said. The MSDMA stated that several houses and worker camps caved in due to the landslide, burying at least 22 people beneath the debris. So far, 14 bodies have been recovered and around eight people are still missing, it said.

## BJD to gain from BJP's 9 self-goals: Pandian

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's close aide and senior BJD leader Kartik Pandian Tuesday claimed the Opposition BJP has committed nine self-goals during the ongoing Lok Sabha and Assembly polls thus boosting the regional party's electoral prospect.

Pandian claimed that the BJP's self-goals will help BJD and none can stop the regional party from forming the government for the sixth consecutive time.

He also claimed that the BJD has so far by the end of the Phase III Assembly polls, already secured majority to form government in the state and the next and final phase of voting will be held in BJD's stronghold areas June 1.

Pandian claimed that the number one self-goal or 'mistake' of BJP was to drag Lord

Jagannath's name to the political discourse and also using abusive language against Odisha's most popular and five-time Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

"The people of Odisha do not appreciate these words against a respected person like Patnaik," he said. On the second self-goal, Pandian said they have said in the manifesto to 'close down' the Mission Shakti if BJP comes to power. They have all along conspired against Mission Shakti which has about 70 lakh women membership. This possible action of BJP has created a 'panicky situation' among the women.

He said if the BJP comes to power, it will 'stop' the benefits of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) for the people of Odisha by implementing Ayushman Bharat scheme. While Ayushman Bharat scheme is only for the BPL people, BSKY covers about 90 per cent of the state's popu-



lation.

"This is the third self-goal and the people of Odisha will teach BJP a lesson in the elections," Pandian said.

He said the BJD government has introduced school, college, university and technical education institutions transformation. The BJP will 'close down' all such activities if it comes to power. This apart, the BJP will also 'stop' giving scholarships to

the students, Pandian claimed.

On the fifth self-goal, Pandian said the tribals 'fear' that the BJP will 'stop' the BJD's Special Development Councils (SDCs) which work to protect and promote the tribal language and culture. No BJP-ruled state has such facilities for the tribals as provided by the Patnaik government in Odisha, he claimed.

This apart, Pandian said that the people are apprehensive that the state's communal harmony will be disturbed if BJP comes to power. In 'Double Engine Sarkar' states, there is illegal extortion collection and small businessmen are the victims, he alleged. The people apprehend that such culture will also come to Odisha if BJP forms government in the state, he said.

Regarding MSP of paddy, Pandian said that the BJP has now announced to give Rs 3,100 per quintal of paddy. The people

are now asking why it was not implemented earlier while the Central government is the authority to decide the rate of MSP.

He said the saffron party got a shock after the Patnaik government announced free electricity to about 90 per cent of the households. They have now coined free power versus solar power.

BJP's solar power scheme will meet the fate of Ujjawala scheme where the women had to pay heavy price after getting a cylinder or two free of cost, he said. On the BJP's ninth self-goal, Pandian said it is BJP's 'Subhadra Yojana' under which the saffron party announced to give Rs 50,000 to each woman.

"If each woman in Odisha gets Rs 50,000, the total amount required will be Rs 1 lakh crore. This is another 'jumla' of BJP after the false assurance of Rs 15 lakh to each family," Pandian said.



IN FULL SWING: Maharana servitors busy building chariots at Rath Yard in Puri, Tuesday. PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

## Withdraw cases against Kapadia: Tharoor to Modi

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 28:** Congress leader Shashi Tharoor Tuesday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he hailed director Payal Kapadia for winning the Grand Prix award at the Cannes Film Festival, asking if India is proud of her, shouldn't his government immediately withdraw the "cases" against her and fellow FTII students.

Last week, Kapadia became the first Indian filmmaker to win the Grand Prix award, the second highest honour at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, for her Malayalam-Hindi feature film "All We Imagine As Light". Following the win, Modi had said the country is proud of her.

Back in 2015, Kapadia was one of the protesting students who went on strike to oppose actor-politician Gajendra Chauhan's appointment as the chairperson of the Pune-based Film and Television Institute of India (FTII).

In a post on X, Tharoor said, "Modi ji, if India is proud of her, should your government not immediately #WithdrawTheCases against her and fellow FTII students protesting against your government's arbitrary appointment of an unqualified Chairman?" Tharoor's remarks came in response to Modi's post on X on May 26 in which he wrote, "India is proud of Payal Kapadia for her historic feat of winning the Grand Prix at the 77th Cannes Film Festival for her work 'All We Imagine as

Light'. An alumnus of FTII, her remarkable talent continues to shine on the global stage, giving a glimpse of the rich creativity in India. This prestigious accolade not only honours her exceptional skills but also inspires a new generation of Indian filmmakers."

According to protesting students in 2015, Chauhan did not match the vision and stature of past chairmen of the FTII governing council, and his appointment appeared "politically coloured". During the 139-day strike, the students had also allegedly gheraoed and confined the then FTII director Prashant Pathrabe in his office over some academic issues. This had led to the police entering the campus and arresting some of the protesters.

## 'Environment-friendly food options could help cut emissions'

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 28:** Switching food and drinks with more environment-friendly alternatives could cut down greenhouse gas emissions from groceries by 26 per cent, a new research analysing purchases of 7,000 Australian households has found.

Roughly, the same amount of emissions would be cut if over 19 lakh cars were taken off the road in the country, according to researchers.

Making bigger changes, such as swapping a frozen meat lasagne for the vegetarian option, could reduce emissions by as much as 71 per cent, they said.

To make this happen, the authors called for on-pack labelling of greenhouse gas emissions for every packaged food product so that consumers can make informed choices.

"While consumers are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of the food system and willing to make more sustainable food choices, they lack reliable information to identify the more environmentally friendly options," said epidemiologist Allison Gaines, lead author of the study published in the journal Nature Food.

For their analysis, the researchers used the FoodSwitch database, maintained by The George Institute, UK, for information on ingredients, weights and production life cycles.

## HEATWAVE SWEEPS STATE; BOUDH HOTTEST AT 45.9°C

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Odisha is reeling under intense heatwave conditions, with day temperature rising to above 40 degrees Celsius in as many as 17 locations in the state.

Boudh became the hottest place in the state with mercury rising to an unprecedented 45.9 degrees Celsius, followed by 45.3 degrees Celsius in Sonapur and 45 degrees Celsius in Titlagarh.

In most parts of Western Odisha such as Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bolangir and Bhawanipatna, the day temperature is hovering over 44 de-

grees Celsius. The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack recorded day temperature above 39 degrees Celsius.

IMD sources said due to prevailing dry conditions in the state and strengthening of north-westerly dry winds in middle and upper level of the atmosphere, maximum temperature (day) is likely to be 40 degrees Celsius or more at many places in the districts of interior Odisha from May 28 to June 1 next.

Consequently maximum temperature (day) is likely to be above normal by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius over some districts of



interior Odisha from May 28 to June 1 and above normal by 2 to

3 degrees Celsius over few districts of coastal Odisha.

Due to absence of any major synoptic features and presence of high humidity in lower levels, hot and humid conditions are very likely over coastal Odisha during the next three-four days, the IMD said in its bulletin.

However, establishment of a north-south trough like features towards June 1 is likely to trigger thunderstorms activity from June 1 onwards over some districts of coastal Odisha.

The IMD had advised the people to take precautionary measures while going outside during the peak hours of the day.

There will be gradual rise in maximum temperature (day) by

2 to 3 degrees Celsius during next two days at many places over the districts of Odisha and there will be no large change thereafter, it said.

The weatherman has issued 'yellow warning' of hot and humid weather conditions at one or two places in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati districts from May 28 to 30.

The heatwave conditions are also likely to prevail in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bolangir, Sambalpur and Nuapada districts May 29 and May 30, it said.



# Man held for duping people of ₹50 crore

Sleuths of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) nabbed managing director of a ponzi firm, which defrauded around 2,000 investors, from Chandbali in Bhadrak district

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** The Crime Branch of Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Tuesday arrested the managing director of a Ponzi company, for allegedly duping 2,000 investors of ₹50 crore in the state.

EOW sources here said accused Mohan Kumar Parida was arrested from Chandbali under Sections 406/420/467/468/471/120-B IPC, Sec 4/5/6/ PCMCs (Banning) Act and Section 6 of OPID Act r/w Section 66 IT Act.

The arrested accused was produced before the Court of PO, designated court under OPID Act, Cuttack Tuesday.

The case was registered on the written complaint of one Chhita Ranjan Palo of Kalinga Nagar here against the company M/s Way to Add India Private Limited, its managing director Parida and director of the company and his wife Pushpalata Behura.

Palo had alleged that Parida and others had promised him and many other investors to pay high returns on the invested amount apart from promising different bonus and commission under different



schemes floated by the company.

Palo had deposited ₹44.60 lakh during 2023 and initially received the return of ₹12,600. Thereafter, no amount was paid to him by the accused.

According to EOW, during the period 2020-23, Parida floated different schemes like Autopool package and boosting package among others and induced the members of the public to invest with the company through its two schemes to get hefty returns i.e. 26 per cent per month consecutively for three months on the invested amount. Besides, he also promised a bonus of two per cent for the investors for enrolling new members.

As per the norms, one can

join the scheme by depositing ₹2,500, which is non-refundable. After depositing the amount, the investor would be given a login ID under which the investor can further enroll three persons to get more commission or bonus. Once an investor joins the scheme, initially, he was given the Ayurvedic products of ₹500, the EOW said.

The EOW sources further said during the investigation, it was found that the accused, made some initial return to the investors but after collecting more than ₹50 crore from over 2,000 investors, he fled away with the collected amount, which was misappropriated by him, the EOW revealed.

During the probe, the EOW found that the company was not authorised to take any public deposit either by RBI or SEBI. The company was not issuing any money receipt rather asking the investors to deposit the invested amount in the company accounts.

The EOW, during the investigation, seized a laptop containing many incriminating materials like list of investors, the amount invested and payment sheets among others.



**INOPERATIVE:** Boating facility in Taladanda canal in Cuttack remains non-functional due to insufficient water, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

## Outfits observe World Menstrual Hygiene Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** City-based Aaina foundation along with different organisations, educational institutes and UN agencies came together to observe Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Day here Tuesday.

The programme was aimed at creating awareness and breaking taboo around menstruation in general.

On the occasion, several panel discussions were held on topics like 'Menstruation and Climate Change', 'Inclusion and Menstruation', 'Myth and Belief on Menstruation', 'Individual



idea on period-friendly world'. The delegate members shared their views on menstrual hygiene and explained how negative environment causes unhealthy menstrual hygiene practices.

"Menstrual hygiene is more than just a health issue—it's a matter of human rights, dignity and equality. As we celebrate World Menstrual Hygiene Day, let's commit to creating a world where every individual has ac-

cess to safe and dignified menstrual hygiene management. Together, we all can break the silence and end stigma," said secretary of Aaina Foundation Sneha Mishra.

ActionAid India, in collaboration with Centre for Child and Women Development (CCWD), organised an event to commemorate the day, where young girls were educated about menstrual hygiene management.

"The objective of the programme was to sensitise women and young girls living in poverty about the benefits of using sanitary pads," said Saraswati Parida coordinator of the event.

## CM offers help to cyclone-hit Assam

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik assured all possible assistance to the people of Assam to bring back normalcy in the aftermath of cyclone Remal.

Taking to social media account, the CM said, "Concerned to know about the situation in Assam affected by cyclone Remal. Deeply anguished over the loss of life and damage to the property, Odisha stands with Assam in this hour of need and offers all possible assistance to bring back normalcy."



Three persons, including a woman, were killed and 17 others sustained injuries as heavy rain accompanied by strong winds lashed the state due to cyclone Remal, officials of Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) confirmed Tuesday.

Several districts were put on high alert in the wake of a forecast for heavy to extremely heavy rainfall under the impact of Remal, which made landfall in neighbouring West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Power supply was disrupted in lower Assam as electric poles fell, and water-logging was reported from different towns, officials said.

### CLASSIFIED

### LOST

Notice is here by given that the following Lease Deed in favor of M/s Ashamani Poly Products Pvt. Ltd. bearing No.-10061109857, have been misplaced and not traceable. If found inform to below address Bhagant Das, Salabani, Janaganj, Remuna, Balasore- 756019 M-7978136109, Email-ashapolly@rediffmail.com

## Funkwal assumes charge as ECoR GM

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Parmeshwar Funkwal, Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) has assumed the position of general manager at East Coast Railway (ECoR) recently. Funkwal is an alumnus of IIT-Kanpur and 1988 batch officer of the Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE).

With a remarkable career spanning decades, Funkwal has held several important portfolios such as DRM/Rajkot, ADRM/Ahmedabad, chairman/RRB, and executive director/RDSO. Prior to his appointment at ECoR, he served as principal chief engineer in Western Railway, Mumbai.

During his tenure at RDSO, Funkwal played a pivotal role in introducing innovative technologies for tracks and bridges which helped to decrease runtime between stations. Besides railway engineering, he has vast experience in human resources functions, research and designs, and



general administration. Funkwal has also published several research papers on railway track, bridge, and environmental engineering in some of the major international journals. He has presented papers at International Heavy Haul Association (IHHA) conferences in Beijing (China), Calgary (Canada), and New Delhi.

In addition, Funkwal has a keen interest in literature, and some of his poems have been published in contemporary Hindi literary magazines.

## Two get 2-yr RI in robbery case

**Bhubaneswar:** A local court here Tuesday convicted two men on the charges of robbery and sentenced them to undergo rigorous imprisonment (RI) for two years in a 2023 case. The case pertains to the house robbery of former DGP Manmohan Praharaj in IRC village under Nayapalli police station limits. The convicts are identified to be Aju Bardhan and SK Islam alias Kadam. The case, meanwhile, was represented in the court by additional public prosecutor (APP) Kalpataru Sahoo, Saroj Kumar Swain and Sabita Choudhury. Announcing the verdict, additional Sessions Court Judge Puja Jain held the duo guilty under Section 457 and 380 of IPC. The court, in addition, slapped a fine of ₹500 on each of the convict. Sahoo said the duo gained entry inside the house of former DGP by breaking open the door in the wee hours of September 30, 2023. Following this, they cracked open the iron wardrobe and a security locker, and later decamped with one gold necklace, a pair of gold ear rings, two gold bangles and a cash of ₹10,000. The Nayapalli police soon launched a probe into the incident and nabbed the duo shortly.

## LOK SABHA POLLS Phase IV voter turnout highest; Phase V lowest

**THE FINAL PHASE OF THE POLLS WILL BE HELD JUNE 1 WHERE 57 SEATS IN EIGHT STATES WILL GO FOR VOTE**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 28:** Amongst the six phases of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, the fourth phase recorded the maximum voter turnout in percentage terms, while the fifth phase the lowest.

According to the phase six turnout figures issued by the Election Commission Tuesday, the sixth phase of polls held May 25 recorded a turnout of 63.37 per cent. As many as 58 constituencies spread across eight states went to polls in phase 6.

According to data issued earlier by the poll panel, the fourth phase recorded a turnout of 69.16 per cent, the highest among the six phases.



A total of 86 constituencies in 10 states went to polls in the fourth phase May 13.

The fifth phase of the polls held May 20 recorded a turnout of 62.20 per cent, the lowest among the phases in percentage terms.

As many as 49 seats in eight states went to polls in the fifth phase.

The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections held April 19 in 102 seats across 21 states

recorded a turnout of 66.14 per cent.

In the second phase, held April 26 in 88 seats across 13 states, the turnout was recorded at 66.71 per cent, marginally higher than the first phase.

In the third phase, 94 seats across 11 states went to polls May 7 and recorded a turnout of 65.68 per cent. The final phase of the polls will be held June 1 where 57 seats in eight states will go for vote.

## Unstable climate may afflict humans with new diseases

According to experts, humanity's departure from the stable climate will spring surprises as some of the existing diseases may appear in new places or spread with greater ferocity or even emerge in new forms



**E**arth's growing fever has obvious repercussions for human health, like heatwaves that are hotter than our physiology can tolerate. Humanity's departure from the stable climate it inherited will yield surprises, too, though. Some of those may be existing diseases appearing in new places or spreading with greater ferocity. And some, experts fear, may be new diseases entirely.

The mosquito-borne infection malaria killed more than half a million people each year during the last decade. Most of these victims were children and almost all (95 per cent in 2022) were in Africa.

Parasites are on the march "The relationship between cli-

mate and malaria transmission is complex and has been the subject of intense study for some three decades," say water and health experts Mark Smith (University of Leeds) and Chris Thomas (University of Lincoln). Much of this research has focused on sub-Saharan Africa, the global epicentre of malaria cases and deaths. Smith and Thomas combined temperature and water movement projections to produce a continent-wide analysis of malaria risk.

Their results showed that the conditions for malaria transmission will become less suitable overall, especially in West Africa. But where temperature and humidity are likely to suit infectious mosquitoes, which can host and

transmit West Nile virus," adds Michael Head, a senior research fellow in global health at the University of Southampton.

Research suggests that the global transmission of mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and dengue will change, says Mark Booth, a senior lecturer in parasite epidemiology at Newcastle University.

Some diseases will bring fresh

torment for the species humans' farm. Bluetongue, a virus transmitted by midges, is expected to infect sheep further afield - in central Africa, western Russia and the US - than subtropical Asia and Africa where it evolved, Booth says.

And the prognoses for some diseases afflicting humans will worsen. UCL academics Sanjay Sisodiya, a neuroscientist and Mark Maslin, an earth system scientist, found that climate change is exacerbating the symptoms of certain brain conditions.

A species that evolved in Africa, humans are comfortable between 20 degrees Celsius and 26 degrees Celsius and within 20 per cent and 80 per cent humidity, Sisodiya and Maslin say. Our brain is already working close to the limit of its preferred temperature range in most cases, so even small increases matter.

"When those environmental conditions move rapidly into

unaccustomed ranges, as is happening with extreme temperatures and humidity related to climate change, our brain struggles to regulate our temperature and begins to malfunction."

One planet, one health Clearly, staying healthy isn't as simple as regulating what you eat or how often you exercise. There is a lot that is beyond your immediate control.

"Within less than three years, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared two public health emergencies of international concern: Covid-19 in February 2020 and monkeypox in July 2022," said Arindam Basu, an associate professor of epidemiology and environmental health at the University of Canterbury.

"At the same time, extreme weather events are being reported continuously across the world and are expected to become more frequent and intense," he said.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.



# Ganjam suffers due to lack of industrialisation



form it into an all-weather one. Hence locals are losing out on work, sources added.

During the UPA government, the Centre announced that it was planning to set up a wagon factory at Sitalapalli near this town. Funds were also sanctioned. However, it was cancelled when the NDA government came to power in 2014. With it thousands of people who had hoped for jobs at the factory vanished.

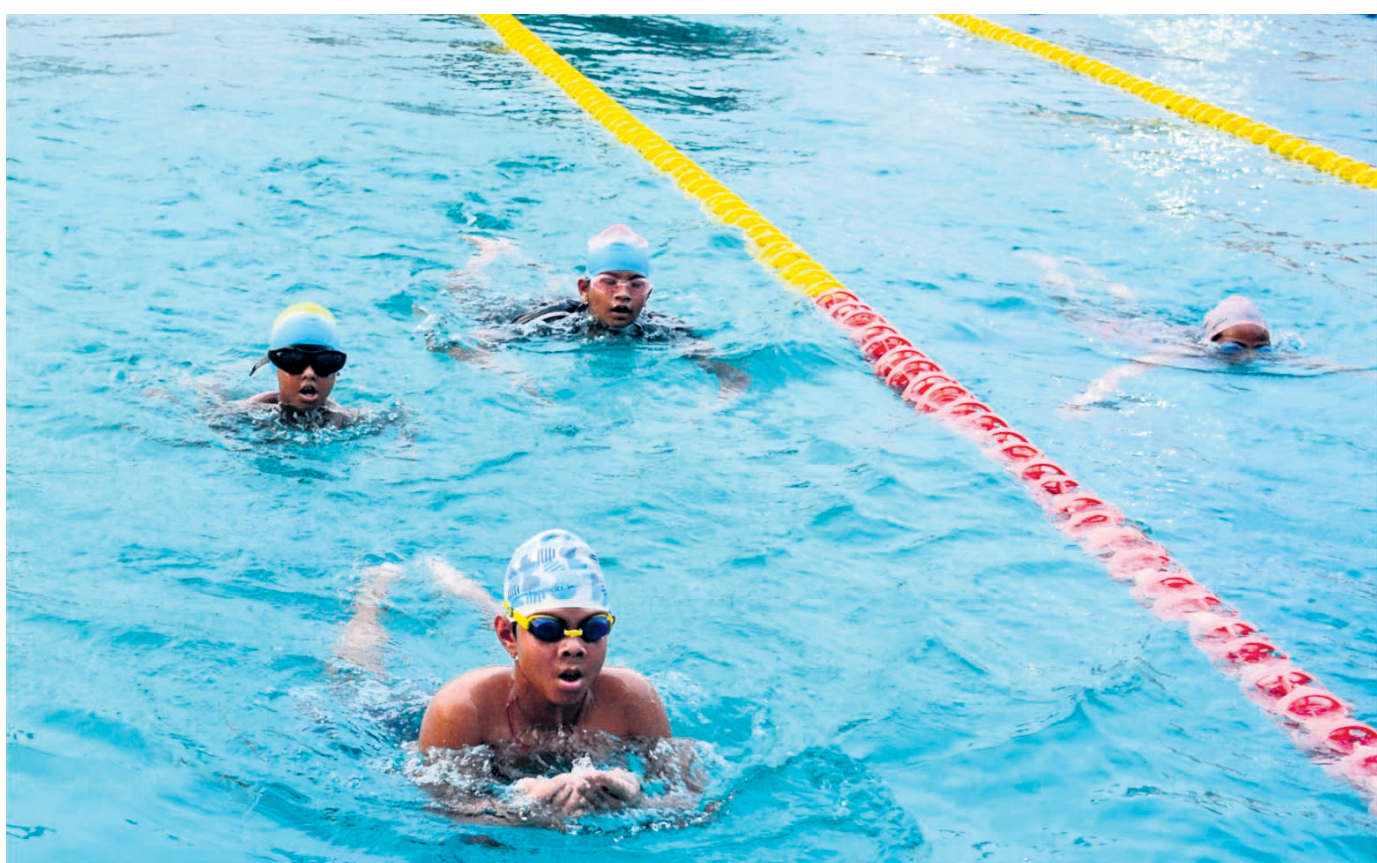
Similarly, a survey was conducted in 2009 for construction of a new rail route from Gopalpur to Rayagada district. The survey was completed in time and the Union Finance Commission also prepared a plan outlay for the project. Since then 15 years have elapsed, but the project is still stuck in the survey stage. Had the Centre taken steps for construction of the tracks, it would have ushered employment for thousands and would have connected many tribal-dominated villages in both Ganjam and Rayagada districts, locals opined.

Development of the railway tracks would have also enabled Nalco to send its products to Gopalpur port through wagons. This would have facilitated industrial growth, locals opined. The lack of industrial growth is having an adverse impact on the economy of the district, they added.

conductive atmosphere and necessary infrastructure.

Cases in point are the Aska cooperative sugar mill built in the British era. It is in sick condition and is in urgent need of revival. A cooperative cotton mill was running in the district, but is now shut. Locals pointed out that during election campaigns, various parties blame each other for the impasse in industrialisation. They also promise to revive the sick industries. However, once the elections are over, the vows are forgotten.

The Centre-owned Indian Rare Earths Ltd (IREL) was established long back near the district headquarters of Chhatrapur. The rare black sand produced by IREL is exported to various foreign countries. However, it does not operate smoothly, sources said. There is a port at Gopalpur, but both the Centre and the state government have failed to trans-



**COOLING ACT:** With mercury hovering around 44 degrees Celsius, kids cool themselves off at Dr Jhasaketan Sahu Swimming Pool Complex in Sambalpur during a summer training camp, Tuesday

## Pregnant elephant dies after falling into trench

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, May 28:** In a tragic incident, a 10-year-old pregnant elephant died after falling into a trench near Asanaghathi forest under Kuldiha forest range in Balasure district Monday night.

As per reports, the pregnant elephant left her habitat in the Kuldiha Sanctuary bordering Balasure and Mayurbhanj districts in search of food Monday.

However, she fell into a trench dug by the Forest department to prevent the pachyderms from leaving their habitat and intruding into human settlements.

On being informed, Forest department staff rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation. Excavators were also employed to help the elephant come out of the trench but all efforts to rescue the elephant alive failed.

## RSP trade unions give mass demonstration call May 29

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 28:** A united mass demonstration call has been given Tuesday by all trade unions active in Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) at the Bisra Chowk from 8am to 9am Wednesday.

A combined meeting of the trade unions was held at the office of the Rourkela Shramik Sangh (RSS), the recognised union of RSP affiliated to INTUC. The joint platform of all the unions decided that the workers of SAIL and RSP will hold a mass demonstration to create a pressure on the management.

Their demands include payment of 39 months arrears of the workers, hike in the night shift allowance, commencement of the S-12 and S-13 grades, formalisation of 10th pay commission through MOA by convening a complete meeting of the National Joint Commission for Steel (NJCS).

Along with Prasant Behera, general secretary of RSS, those present in the meeting included Bishnu Mohanty, all-India vice

*Their demands include payment of 39 months arrears of the workers, hike in the night shift allowance*

president of CITU, Pramod Das, Ajit Nayak, Ramesh Sahu, Nilakantha Das and others. The leaders strongly criticised the "time consuming" techniques of the SAIL management in fulfilling the just demands and rights of the workers. They came down heavily on the management saying, "There has been delay in the payment of the arrears, night shift allowance, enhancement of HRA and implementation of the S-12 and S-13, despite significant increase in productivity and profit to the tune of ₹2,500 crores."

They strongly demanded to initiate immediate decision on all these issues during the sub-committee meeting of the NJCS to be held May 30 and called for a full strength NJCS meeting to complete the MOA for the pay agreement.

## AM/NS India programme helps youth of Kendrapara secure jobs in top firms

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, May 28:** Under its skill development initiative 'Daksh', the leading steel maker ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) in collaboration with National Skill Development Corporation had set up a Digital Skill Centre in Kendrapara December 7, 2023 to impart skill development training to the local underprivileged youth.

100 local youths have successfully completed the placement-linked IT/ITES training in the first batch. 85 out of the 100 local youth have already got job offers and have been successfully placed in various reputed companies like Wipro, Tech-Mahindra, Flipkart and Tattva Technology, Bhubaneswar as Domestic Data Entry Operators and Domestic IT Help Desk. More than 100 jobs were offered to the candidates in this batch.

Young boys and girls from 11 nearby villages in the Mahakalapara block were selected for the training through extensive consultation with the community and village heads. Besides technical training, all the enrolled candidates were groomed in non-technical courses



including communication skills, holistic personality development and interview skills. On successful completion of the program, the trainees received professional certificates and job placements. In the second batch, another 100 youths will be trained from nearby villages.

On the occasion Vikas Yadvendu, Head CSR, AM/NS India said, "I congratulate all the youths who have been successfully placed after the completion of the course. We are very pleased to see that 55% of the participants in the first batch are local girls, and we hope to see even greater participation in the future. At AM/NS India, we are committed to serving local communities and bringing about brighter futures for all."

AM/NS India is running eight digital skill centres at other operating locations and has trained more than 1500 educated and unemployed youths out of which 74% have received job opportunities in reputed companies.

## IAF mock drill in Baripada ahead of PM Modi's visit

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, May 28:** Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election campaign visit to Chhau Padia in this town Wednesday, a mock drill was conducted by the Indian Air Force (IAF) at Reserve Police Ground here in Mayurbhanj district, Tuesday.

A team of senior military officers arrived at the Baripada Reserve Police Ground in a separate helicopter at 8am Tuesday to assess the situation. They discussed the security arrangements and the management of Modi's convoy with district administration and police officials. For security purposes, 25 platoons of police force have been deployed with senior police officers in charge at each venue. Over 50 police officers including ASPs, DSPs, inspectors, and ASIs have been assigned duties.

With the final phase of elections scheduled for June 1, heavyweights are continuing their marathon campaigns. Extensive preparations are being made by the party for Modi's visit to President Droupadi Murmu's hometown. Arrangements have been made for an estimated gathering of one lakh people.

PM Modi will address the Vijay



**With the final phase of elections scheduled for June 1, heavyweights are continuing their marathon campaigns**

Sankalp Rally at 12:30pm Wednesday, seeking blessings from the public for votes. The district administration and police have made comprehensive arrangements for the visit.

SP S Susree held a detailed discussion on security arrangements with the senior officials

in a meeting. Air force officers inspected the helipad thoroughly, using metal detectors, sniffer dogs, and a bomb squad. They even found and removed a bicycle left behind during the helipad's construction.

After separately inspecting the three helipads at the venue, they submitted their report. Following the helicopter's arrival Tuesday morning, officials inspected the ground and discussed the arrangements with police officers. Strict measures have been taken to ensure there are no lapses in security.

# MYSTERY SHROUDS DEATH OF FORMER SARPANCH IN ANGUL

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhendipada, May 28:** Mystery shrouds the death of a BJD leader and former sarpanch whose body was found lying near the basil plant on the ground floor of his residence at Jereng Dehuri Sahi village under Jarpada police limits in Angul district in the wee hours of Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Bibhuti Gadnaik, who had reportedly gone to sleep on the roof top after having his dinner at house Monday night. The matter came to the fore after Jarpada police seized the mutilated body of Bibhuti lying near the basil plant during daybreak, Tuesday.

Family members cried foul over his death with his son Bikash Ranjan Gadnaik alleging that his father has been murdered over past political enmity. He lodged a complaint at the Jarpada police station. Jarpada IIC Nirjala Gochhayat and SDPO Ramakant Mahalik reached the spot and conducted a probe. A scientific team was also pressed into service.

However, DIG Uma Shankar Das, who is also the SP in-charge of Angul, rejected the charges at a press con-



**Family members cried foul over his death and lodged a complaint at the Jarpada police station. However, DIG Uma Shankar Das, who is also the SP in-charge of Angul, rejected the charges**

focus on the murder charges brought by the family members.

Meanwhile, police have stepped up patrolling in the area and a team of cops has been kept on alert after a woman member of the family sought security citing threat to their lives, the DIG stated in the press conference.

Sources said that miscreants allegedly pelted stones at his camp house at Bhagirathipur village, two days back. After the issue was resolved at Jarpada police station Monday, he returned and had his dinner before going to the rooftop to sleep.

However, family members spotted his badly bruised body lying near the basil plant of his residence at about 4am, Tuesday.

ference held Tuesday. He said preliminary inquiry was not indicative of murder. Police registered a case of unnatural death and intensified probe into the case.

The actual reason behind the death of the BJD leader could be ascertained only after the availability of the post-mortem report, the DIG said. Moreover, the investigation will also

**Central Bank of India**  
Regional Office: Plot No.: 108-B, 1st Floor, Unit - VII, Surya Nagar,  
Near Gopabandhu Square, Bhubaneswar-751003

**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
(For Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the **Authorised Officer of the Central Bank of India** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices calling upon the following Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said Notices. The Borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **possession** of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on the date mentioned below. The Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the **Central Bank of India** for an amount stated and interest thereon. **The Borrower's/Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.**

BRANCH/ Name of the Account / Borrowers & Address	Name and Address of Guarantors/Mortgagors	Amount demanded in Securitisation Notice	Date of Securitisation Notice/Date of Possession	Description of Mortgaged / Charged Properties
<b>JATNI BRANCH /</b> Borrower: Ajit Kumar Mohanty, At: Plot No.: 2428, Loco Colony, Jatni, P.O./P.S.: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, PIN-752050	Guarantor/Mortgagor: Bilasini Mohanty, W/o.: Pravakar Mohanty, At: Plot No.: 2428, Loco Colony, Jatni, P.O./P.S.: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, PIN-752050	₹16,63,445/- as on 08.11.2023 + interest thereon & other expenses etc.	08.11.2023 / 23.05.2024	All that part & parcel of the property in the name of <b>Bilasini Mohanty, W/o.: Pravakar Mohanty</b> , situated over Khata No.: 71, Plot No.: 2428, Area:
Ac. 0.90 Dec., Mouza: Kudiary, P.S.: Jatni, Tahasil: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Bounded by East: Road, West: Plot No.: 2421, South: Vendor, North: Plot No.: 2420				
<b>CUTTACK BRANCH /</b> Borrowers: 1) Mrs. Bijaylaxmi Das, W/o: Late Kunja Bihari Das, 2) Mrs. Puspallata Das, D/o.: Late Kunja Bihari Das, Both are At: Thoria Sahi, P.O: Buxi Bazar, Dist.: Cuttack, PIN-753001	Mortgagors: 1) Mrs. Bijaylaxmi Das, W/o: Late Kunja Bihari Das, 2) Mrs. Puspallata Das, D/o.: Late Kunja Bihari Das, Both are At: Thoria Sahi, P.O: Buxi Bazar, Dist.: Cuttack, PIN-753001	₹24,42,997/- as on 26.12.2023 + interest thereon & other expenses etc.	26.12.2023 / 28.05.2024	All that part & parcel of the property in the name of <b>Mrs. Puspallata Das &amp; Mrs. Bijaylaxmi Das</b> , situated over Khata No.: 880, Plot No.: 171, Area: Ac. 0.024 Dec., Mouza: Cuttack Sahar Unit-22, Mirkamalpatna, P.S.: Mangalabag, Tahasil: Cuttack Sadar No.: 222, Dist.: Cuttack, Bounded by East: Baya, West: Road, South: Prema Sahoo, North: Municipality Road
Ac. 0.012 Dec., Mouza: Dhenkanal, P.S.: Dhenkanal, Bounded by East: Road, West: Satyabhama Behera, South: Plot No.: 2302, North: Plot No.: 7867				
<b>DHENKANAL BRANCH /</b> Borrowers: 1) Debasmita Behera, D/o: Hadibandhu Behera, 2) Hadibandhu Behera, Both are at Jagannath Road, Malhar Sahi, Dhenkanal, PIN - 759001	Guarantor: Bikash Behera, S/o: Hadibandhu Behera / Mortgagor: Hadibandhu Behera, Both are at Jagannath Road, Malhar Sahi, Dhenkanal, PIN - 759001	₹3,13,177/- as on 07.09.2023 + interest thereon & other expenses etc.	08.09.2023 / 28.05.2024	All that part & parcel of the property in the name of <b>Hadibandhu Behera</b> , situated over Khata No.: 3470/4191, Plot No.: 2301/22777, Area: Ac. 0.012 Dec., Mouza: Dhenkanal Town, P.S.: Dhenkanal, Bounded by East: Road, West: Satyabhama Behera, South: Plot No.: 2302, North: Plot No.: 7867
Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 28.05.2024				

**Authorised Officer, Central Bank of India**

**RITES LIMITED**  
INTRODUCTION OF 25KV TRACTION  
"PUBLIC NOTIFICATION"

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the complete section of the **SARLA freight maintenance facility for BTAP Examination at SARLA station yard of Sambalpur Division of East Coast Railway** that the 25,000 Volts, 50 Hz, A.C. Over Head Traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section, on and from the same date the Over head Traction Lines shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said over Head Lines.

**SECTION/YARD: SARLA EXAMINATION, ROH & BTAP LINES AT SARLA STATION YARD (SLRA) OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.**

Date of Energisation: 06.06.2024

**Jt. General Manager (Elect.)**  
RITES Ltd.



FOCUS NATION

# TURBULENCE



The world's largest democracy is currently in the throes of its most difficult test with the people of India rightfully demanding a just government for their sustenance and wellbeing

accreditation of the National Human Rights Commission to the Geneva-based Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions for the second successive year; the US State Dept spokesman's statement that India should take care of basic human rights of its citizens coming on the heels of the adverse report of the US Commission of International Religious Freedom regarding the Indian government's treatment of its minorities. The other worrying factor for India was its signing of a 10-year agreement with Iran to equip and manage the Shahed Behesti terminal at Chahbahar port, provoking the Biden administration to launch a subtle warning that this could open India to the possibility of sanctions. This may not fructify given the strategic partnership between India and USA, with the latter using India as a counter to China's growing influence in the region. So long as US-China rivalry persists India can be assured of securing the largesse of USA.

Abraham Lincoln in his famous Gettysburg address (1863) had spoken of a new birth of freedom. His words were inspiring for generations as he had presciently observed:

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The world's largest democracy is currently in the throes of its most difficult test with the people of India rightfully demanding a just government for their sustenance and wellbeing. The results of 4 June would testify to this belief, or otherwise it would send out an ominous warning to the world of what the dangers of unbridled authoritarianism and institutional collapse could amount to. If not stemmed by the forceful voice of the people, the Mother of Democracy could likely transform into a banana republic and India's global clout and plutocratic muscle would stand to fray.

*The writer is a former diplomat. Views expressed are personal.*

Professors Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt assign the charge of destruction of democracies to elected leaders. They write:

"Without robust norms, constitutional checks and balances do not serve as bulwarks of democracy we imagine them to be. Institutions become political weapons, wielded forcefully by those who control them against those who do not. This is how elected autocrats subvert democracy-packing and 'weaponizing' the courts and other neutral agencies, buying off the media and the private sector (or bullying them into silence), and rewriting the rules of politics to tilt the playing field against opponents. The tragic paradox of the electoral route to authoritarianism is that democracy's assassins use the very institutions of democracy-gradually, subtly, and even legally- to kill it."

Of course, the writers in their 2018 publication were more concerned about the failure of Western democracies and called out the shenanigans of elected autocrats in the developing world as in Venezuela, Hungary, Poland, Russia, or Turkey. India had not then found a place in the list of electoral autocracies as the V. Dem Institute was later to certify India, along with a host of Western civil society organisations in the same vein. These 'unwarranted' remarks have been consistently disregarded by the Indian government as an internal matter and therefore none of their concern, added to a strong dose of whataboutery.

History bears witness that internal dynamics play a major part in conveying a sense of the country's overall performance and in its external perception. This has been all too evident in the course of the 7-phase general elections playing out currently where several external issues have come to the fore in making a forceful plea for the regime's credibility. Thus, EAM Jaishankar's statements on India's position as an emerging power and its leadership position as "Viswa Bandhu" (a

quiet transformation from "Viswa Guru" as during India's presidency of G20), have not gone unnoticed. Subsequently, the minister in a bid to reaffirm India's political strength stated tongue-in-cheek that PoK which had slipped out of India's hand would be reverted back under the strong leadership of the PM. The same statement has been repeated by several senior ministers during the course of canvassing while there were reports of China building infra projects in Shaksgam valley close to Siachen as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor passing through PoK. Furthermore, the Defence Minister was recently quoted saying that China has annexed 38,000 sq.km of land in Ladakh and has blocked Indian patrolling at several points, a belated admission after umpteen rounds of border talks.

Singing encomiums to India's 'muscular' foreign policy is one thing and getting votes on the basis of the government's performance is another, particularly when domestic issues of livelihood, abject poverty, unemployment, price rise, household debt, drastic fall in domestic savings, and above all widening inequality gap fostered by crony capitalism are of dire concern.

The PM's bravado, post the alleged killings of several Khalistani activists on Pak soil by Indian agents, "ghar mein ghuske marenge" (This is New India, we'll enter their houses

and kill them) found adversarial echoes on the floor of the UNGA when India was castigated as "a dangerous entity" which could cause more global insecurity, rather than security. The unabashed Muslim-bashing during the course of the campaign speeches of ruling party leaders has been left off with a mild caution by the Election Commission while the party's leadership has seemed vindictive in its pronouncement of Indian Muslims as "infiltrators," ostensibly aimed at the Hindu vote bank. Such statements could be adversely taken in Muslim countries in the region with whom paradoxically India has been making serious efforts to build stronger ties, and where bulk of Indian labour remittances, investments and trade are tied up. India's foreign policy characterised as "realpolitik"-dictated by its own interests - even amidst trenchant criticism of the Five Eyes Intelligence group countries of its policy of targeting Khalistani militants on foreign soil has elicited a "couldn't care less attitude" from India's policymakers.

Interestingly, unlike the previous general elections, there is no Pulwama-Balakot incident this time to ratchet nationalistic fervor leading to a smooth ride for the ruling party. On the contrary, local issues predominate the electoral landscape. In addition, several factors indicate the diminution of India's image in the global perception. Important are the deferral in



Malay Mishra

**HISTORY BEARS WITNESS THAT INTERNAL DYNAMICS PLAY A MAJOR PART IN CONVEYING A SENSE OF THE COUNTRY'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE AND IN ITS EXTERNAL PERCEPTION**

IN JEST THIS

## WFH means working from anywhere

During the pandemic, many people were able to work from home (WFH), thanks to the internet and video communication platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This helped keep the COVID virus from spreading and was also quite effective in limiting the spread of office gossip.

But the majority of these employees have returned, somewhat reluctantly, to their offices, where some of them have had to relearn the skill of appearing to be productive.

The lucky ones are still able to WFH for at least a few days a week, which gives them great flexibility. This flexibility has allowed many of them to not just WFH, but also WFS (work from Starbucks), WFM (work from a mall), or even WFMT (work from a movie theatre).

Working from a Starbucks or other coffee shop is quite common, of course. If you work on a laptop or other device, the typical coffee shop will provide you with everything you need to

work efficiently, most importantly a high-speed connection to unlimited caffeine. An internet connection may help too, but in my experience, the internet is too distracting. One moment, you're trying to write a column; the next moment, you're looking at a random Reddit post on whether it's okay to marry someone who has no tattoos.

Working from a shopping mall is fairly common too, especially since many malls have coffee shops, restaurants and food courts, where you can work comfortably. A mall gives you access to many things. While your boss is droning on during a Zoom meeting, you can carry your laptop or phone around and get yourself a cup of coffee, buy some food, or even shop for shoes.

That's what a woman in Bangalore did recently. She was spotted holding her laptop open to a team meeting while looking at sandals and slippers displayed in a shoe store. A man named Karthik Bhaskara shared a photo of the woman on X, apparently

believing that this was unusual behaviour. But in my view, it's quite natural. If you have ever sat through a boring meeting, you know that there are some common thoughts that go through your mind, including "I'm hungry," "I wish I could take a nap," and "I need new shoes."

If the urge to shop for shoes doesn't hit you during meetings, I'd have to guess that (a) you're a man; and (b) you aren't working in a mall, directly across from the shoe store.

It's not that men don't need shoes. It's just that men can usually manage with two pairs of shoes: work shoes and leisure shoes. This doesn't apply to men in certain fields, of course. Men in certain fields can wear their leisure shoes to work.

Women, on the other hand, need a minimum of 482 pairs of shoes.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that the women I know possess 482 pairs of shoes. Far from it. What I'm saying is that the women I know would need to own 482 pairs of shoes before

they respond with a "no" when a friend says: "Happy birthday! Here's a gift card. Would you like to go shoe-shopping?"

Women need more shoes than men largely because they wear a wider variety of clothing and accessories. It's a rare man that has to say to himself, "Oh no, my shoes do not match my bag."

It shouldn't be surprising that a woman would choose to shoe-shop while attending a work meeting. But what about working while sitting in a movie theater? This also happened recently in Bangalore. "Went for a movie yesterday and someone was on laptop throughout the movie," a woman named Rishika wrote on X, sharing an image of a man with a bright laptop in a dark theater.

It's obvious to me from the image that the man was accompanying his wife to a movie, while completing a work assignment.

There is nothing better than making your wife and your boss happy at the same time.

What you are not able to do today, you will achieve tomorrow. Persevere and you shall conquer.

THE MOTHER



## Shining Women

At a time when countless women in India are daily becoming victims of male chauvinism and gender discrimination, two women of the country have made Indians proud by winning coveted prizes on the world stage with their sterling performances. Payal Kapadia and Anasuya Sengupta have brought laurels from the Mecca of cinema - Cannes. Payal became the first person from India to win the prestigious Grand Prix at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, while Anasuya won the Best Actress in the Un Certain Regard section for her role in Konstantin Bojanov's The Shameless.

The spectacular success of Payal is not simply a triumph of art, but it also carries important messages for different spheres of life in India. It is a resounding slap on the face of the country's political establishment and mainstream cinema. Her film - All We Imagine As Light - is the first Indian film in three decades to compete at Cannes in the main competition.

As the director herself stated in her acceptance speech, the film is about friendship among three very different women. She underscores the unfortunate social reality that often women are pitted against each other. But for her "friendship is a very important relationship because it can lead to greater solidarity, inclusivity and empathy." That is the central point made in the film and it assumes significance in the current political context of India where intolerance and communal divide have become the main socio-political-cultural narrative. Its depiction of the romance between the main character Prabha and her Moslem boyfriend is a bold critique of the current situation of the country which has become increasingly polarised along religious lines.

The irony is many who are intolerant towards an inclusive society were among the early ones who showered praise on Payal's stellar achievement. It was the authorities in the government run film institute that was responsible for the persecution of the director when she was a final year film direction student of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune. Her "fault" was she took a stand against a gross abuse of power by the government proposing the name of a popular, but mediocre small screen actor as the chairman of the prestigious FTII. In December 2016, Payal was among six students who had qualified for the foreign exchange programme, in addition to being one of eight students to receive a scholarship set up by private donors for students at the top of their class. However, she was unable to enjoy either of these coveted opportunities. The FTII administration disqualified her, along with several other students, for participating in a students' strike in 2015 against the proposed appointment of actor-turned-politician Gajendra Chauhan as chairman of the institute.

Chauhan had become popular primarily for playing Yudhishthir in the television adaptation of Indian epic Mahabharata. This television serial, along with another based on the epic, Ramayana, had played an important role in moulding public opinion in favour of the proponents of Hindoovta as preached by the BJP. The government's proposal to appoint Chauhan as the FTII chairman sparked the longest protest in the institute's history, as students said he lacked "credentials and vision" and felt that his appointment was "politically coloured." Payal was in the forefront of the 139 day-long protests. For this she was named, along with 34 other students, in a complaint registered by then-institute director Prashant Pathrabe that said a group of 50 students had forcibly detained him in his office. The case is still pending nine years later and is set to be heard in Pune on 26 June.

The congratulatory message posted by the FTII for Payal's feat sounds like the height of hypocrisy. For, the then-director Bhupendra Kainthola remarked in 2017 that the FTII believes an academically bright student must also "learn to function within the framework of institutional rules and good behaviour." Predictably, the FTII message has received an immediate backlash. Indian Oscar-winning sound designer Resul Pookutty wrote in social media wondering whether the FTII has got anything to do with this win.

The lesson that the government should learn from the singular honours won by the two Indian women is that it should not meddle in liberal pursuits of art and literature and allow unfettered freedom of speech and expression. Taking credit for achievements of individuals and hijacking their successes seems to be the only way this government and politicians try to partake in glory on international platforms.

WISDOM CORNER

If we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that sometimes our assumptions and preconceived notions are wrong, and therefore, our interpretation of events is incorrect. This causes us to overreact, to take things personally, or to judge people unfairly.

ELIZABETH THORNTON

Many individuals are doing what they can. But real success can only come if there is a change in our societies and in our economics and in our politics.

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

Some people plant in the spring and leave in the summer. If you're signed up for a season, see it through. You don't have to stay forever, but at least stay until you see it through.

JIM ROHN

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1453: Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottomans.
- 1658: The Battle of Samugarh was fought in a contest for the throne between the sons of the Mughal emperor Shah Jah n following the emperor's serious illness in September 1657.
- 1905: The Russian navy was defeated in the Battle of Tsushima during the Russo-Japanese War.
- 1913: Igor Stravinsky's ballet Le Sacre du printemps is premiered. The performance sparked a riot in the audience as many felt its irregular beat and the percussive character was a sacrilege against music. Today, it is considered one of the key works of 20th-century art music.
- 1942: Bing Crosby records White Christmas. Crosby's rendition of Irving Berlin's song became the most successful of his career and the best-selling Christmas single in history.

LOL

HORSE & THE CAR

An out-of-towner drove his car into a ditch in a desolated area. Luckily, a local farmer came to help with his big strong horse named Buddy.

He hitched Buddy up to the car and yelled, "Pull, Nellie, pull." Buddy didn't move. Then the farmer hollered, "Pull, Buster, pull." Buddy didn't respond. Once more the farmer commanded, "Pull, Jennie, pull." Nothing. Then the farmer nonchalantly said, "Pull, Buddy, pull." And the horse

easily dragged the car out of the ditch. The motorist was most appreciative and very curious. He asked the farmer why he called his horse by the wrong name three times. The farmer said, "Oh, Buddy is blind, and if he thought he was the only one pulling, he wouldn't even try!"



Melvin Durai

**THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN MAKING YOUR WIFE AND YOUR BOSS HAPPY AT THE SAME TIME**

## 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)

OrissaPOST  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Cricket in the US

Sir, When "third man," "fine leg," "googly" and "deep mid-wicket" enter the US of America these would be terms of wonder and curiosity for many Americans who for the very first time will be witnessing the shortest form of cricket as American pitches get ready for the T20 World Cup 2024. Though cricket history has records showing matches played in America during the mid 1800s, the base-ball crazy nation did see cricket tournaments played in the recent times too. The International Cricket Council (ICC) would be keeping their fingers crossed to see that the tournaments turn out to be a huge success as the US has millions of diehard cricket fans from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Caribbean and from other cricket-loving nations. There are millions of Americans too who love cricket and those who wish to know about this wonderful game. Altogether cricket and that too the thrilling suspense packed T20s are sure to get huge attention and publicity in the US and this would spread the game's fervour worldwide. As for our team it's yet another opportunity to display their prowess and power in the T20 format as most of the players carry with them the energy they imbibed during the Indian Premier League (IPL) tournament. Hope they do their best and compensate for the heartbreaking loss in the final of the ODI World Cup a few months ago.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

Foolproof safety

Sir, Two recent heartbreaking incidents - the death of 27 people in a fire at a gaming zone in Gujarat's Rajkot and the death of seven newborn babies in a fire at the New Born Baby Care Hospital in New Delhi - have shocked everyone in the country. In light of such tragic incidents, the regulatory authorities must ensure that the safety system in public places is absolutely foolproof. These cases must be followed up consistently and severe punishment should be given to the guilty as soon as possible. This way we can prevent incidents caused by negligence.

Nabnit Panigrahi, RAYAGADA



# Telangana's new emblem to reflect statehood movement

**CM A REVANTH REDDY HAS DECIDED TO CHANGE THE EMBLEM AS HE BELIEVES THAT THE EXISTING ONE SYMBOLISES THE ARISTOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP OF PAST RULERS**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, May 28:** A decade after its formation, Telangana will have a new official emblem reflecting the statehood movement. The new emblem will replace the one adopted in 2014 when Telangana came into being as the 29th state. The new emblem will be unveiled on 10th state formation day celebrations June 2. The Congress government, which came to power in December 2023, decided to replace the existing emblem which

depicts Kakatiya Kala Thoranam and Charminar, the symbols of Kakatiya and Qutb Shahi dynasties. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy decided to change the emblem as he believes that the existing one symbolises the aristocracy and dictatorship of past rulers. As part of this exercise, he had a meeting with noted artist Rudra Rajesham, who presented 12 draft designs. During the meeting held Monday, the chief minister reportedly suggested a few more changes to the emblem design. Revanth Reddy wants a design which reflects the Telangana movement and the sacrifice of martyrs. Change of emblem was one of the key decisions taken by



the Congress government, reversing the decisions of the previous BRS government. It replaced 'TS' with 'TG' as the state abbreviation. The earlier BRS government had adopted 'TS' as the abbreviation. The new government also decided to change the Talli statue to reflect the sentiments of the Telangana people. The government also adopted Ande Sri's 'Jaya Jaya He Telangana' as the state anthem. Revanth Reddy has roped in Oscar-winning music composer MM Keeravani to compose music for the state song which will be unveiled June 2. The chief minister had a meeting with Keeravani and Ande Sri Sunday and suggested a few changes to the anthem.

# Bomb threat call to Praja Bhavan turns out hoax



Bomb disposal team checks premises of Praja Bhavan, the official residence of Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, after it received a bomb threat, in Hyderabad, Tuesday

**HYDERABAD:** A threat call stating that a bomb would explode at Praja Bhavan, the official residence of Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka here Tuesday, turned out to be a hoax, police said. The caller allegedly made the call to 'Dial-100' and warned that a bomb has been placed and it would explode at Praja Bhavan in Hyderabad city. Police immediately swung into action and searched the premises with the help of the bomb disposal squad. Nothing suspicious was found and the bomb threat call turned out to be a hoax, a senior police official said adding that the hoax call was made from Hyderabad and efforts were on to nab the caller, they said. During preliminary investigation it was found that the caller had been making such calls since morning, the official said. Earlier, Telangana Minister for Panchayat Raj, Rural Development and Women and Child Welfare D Anasuya, popularly known as Seethakka, visited Praja Bhavan, and met with the officials and also the family members of the Deputy CM and discussed the matter. The minister instructed the officials to thoroughly check visitors and to also step up security at Praja Bhavan, an official statement said.

# Incessant rains disrupt life in Kerala



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi/Thiruvananthapuram, May 28:** Intense downpour accompanied by gusty winds Tuesday wreaked havoc in central and south Kerala, as landslides, widespread water-logging and the destruction of houses forced several people to shift to relief camps. Tourist centres have been closed in many districts, including Kottayam and Thiruvananthapuram, and a night travel ban has been imposed in the hilly areas of Idukki district. The landslide caused widespread destruction in the Chokkallu area of Bharananganam village in Kottayam. In Ernakulam district, particularly Kochi city, extremely heavy rainfall lasted for

hours, submerging roads in many areas. Experts said cloudbursts could be the reason for the heavier-than-usual rainfall that pounded various parts of the port city of Kochi, especially the Kalamassery locality, where flood water entered hundreds of houses. Both Kottayam and Ernakulam districts were placed on red alert by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) Tuesday. With the weather agency predicting heavy rainfall in the coming hours, the district administration banned tourists from entering famed holiday destinations like Illikkal Kallu, Ilaveezhappoonchira, Marmala stream in Kottayam, and Ponnudi eco-tourism centre in Thiruvananthapuram. As the water level in the Meenachil River in Kottayam

and Killiyar in Thiruvananthapuram steadily rose, authorities urged local people living on its banks to pay extra vigil and shift to safer places if necessary. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in a Facebook post, warned that the extremely heavy rainfall is likely to trigger dangers such as landslides, mudslides, flooding, and so on. He said that the chances of waterlogging and inundation are high in low-lying areas and along riverbanks. The CM also advised people to avoid unnecessary travel and urged them to remain in safer places. Officials said shutters of dams like Aruvikkara and Malankara dams were raised at particular intervals. Several families were shifted to relief camps, especially in rural and coastal areas



in various districts, they said. South and central districts like Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Kottayam, and Ernakulam mainly bore the brunt of the continuous downpour, which caused waterlogging, damage to houses, trees to be uprooted, and tiny water bodies to overflow, cutting across towns and villages. Earlier in the day, many narrow lanes and busy roads in Kochi city and adjacent areas were submerged due to continuous downpours. People could not venture out of their homes in many areas of the port city as roads were flooded. Vehicles were seen moving at snail's pace on highways following the rain. Normal life was hit in the Kakkanad-Infopark, one of the IT hubs of the state, and Aluva-Edappally areas due to water-

logging. An uprooted tree fell on a state-run KSRTC bus at Thoppumpady in Kochi. Luckily, passengers escaped unhurt. Intense rains caused mudslides and disrupted traffic on Erattupetta and Vagamon roads in Kottayam district. The city and rural areas of the capital district of Thiruvananthapuram have witnessed heavy rains since Monday night. Nedumangad, Neyyattinkara, Kattakkada, and Amboori areas, located in the high ranges of the district, received widespread rainfall. According to the local residents, a portion of a hill behind the famous Bali mandapam at Papanasam in nearby Varkala caved in because of heavy rains. High tides and rough seas were witnessed in coastal areas, posing a threat to fishing vessels. Two incidents of boat capsizing were also reported off the coasts of Muthalappozhi fishing hamlet, located about 30 kilometres away from here. State Revenue Minister K Rajan said the central Kerala region witnessed heavier rainfalls, and the Palluruthy region in Ernakulam district alone received 95 mm of rainfall in one-and-a-half hours, which has been rare in recent times. Kalamassery received 57 mm of rainfall in one-and-a-half hours, he pointed out. Rajan said steps have been taken to open 3,597 relief camps in the state, in view of the situation arising out of the rains. Preparations are underway to set up camps that can accommodate over five lakh people during emergencies, he said.

## PHONE TAPPING

# 'BRS govt snooped on Congress, BJP funders'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, May 28:** In a new twist to the phone-tapping row in Telangana, two police officers arrested in the case have alleged that the previous BRS government snooped on the funders of opposition Congress and BJP. The police officers, in their reported confession statements, revealed that the entire phone-tapping operation was orchestrated to monitor the political rivals to ensure that Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) win the third consecutive Assembly election (held in November 2023). Day after former Deputy Commissioner of Police P Radha Kishan Rao's sensational confession, the statements of two more police officers surfaced Tuesday, throwing fresh allegations against the previous government headed by K Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR). Additional Superintendent of Police Bhujanga Rao and Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Tirupathanna revealed how the special team in the State Intelligence Bureau (SIB) conducted the operation, targeting leaders of Congress, BJP, dissidents within BRS and also businesspersons funding the opposition parties. They also provided details of how the information gathered from phone tapping was used to track and seize money from those close to the leaders of Congress and BJP during the elections. The two officials, who had earlier served in SIB, also alleged



that at the instance of BRS leaders, disputes between companies, businesspersons and VIPs were settled. Phones of opposition leaders, their family members, student leaders and journalists were tapped. Phones of Congress and BRS supporters were also tapped during elections to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, and by-elections to Dubbaka, Huzurabad and Munugode Assembly seats. The political information was provided to the team tasked with phone tapping by then SIB chief Prabhakar Rao, journalist Sravan Kumar and another private person. A plan was prepared to somehow make it sure that BRS wins a third term in power. However, in a big upset, both KCR and Revanth Reddy had lost to the BJP candidate in Kamareddy. The disclosures by two police officers came a day after a confession by former Deputy Commissioner of Police P Radha Kishan Rao. He claimed that KCR wanted to arrest BJP National General Secretary BL Santosh in BRS MLAs poaching case to force a compromise and get rid of the Enforcement Directorate case against his daughter K Kavitha.

# Kerala govt prepares action calendar to prevent Nipah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 28:** The Kerala government said Tuesday that a special action calendar is being prepared for the prevention of a Nipah outbreak, which has haunted the state on four occasions in the past. Nipah outbreaks had been reported in Kozhikode district of Kerala in 2018, 2021, and 2023, and in Ernakulam district in 2019, and the presence of Nipah virus antibodies had been detected in bats in Kozhikode, Wayanad, Idukki, Malappuram, and Ernakulam districts. The calendar is being prepared by including activities for the entire year, especially in the months of May to September, the period when the zoonotic virus is likely to spread, state Health Minister Veena George said. A high-level meeting of health officials was convened here to discuss preventive measures and the department's preparedness in facing any emergency with regard to Nipah, George said in a statement here. During the meeting, the min-



ister directed the officials to give priority to Nipah and bird flu prevention activities. Preparedness should be strengthened in collaboration with the Animal Husbandry and Forest and Education departments, she said. Mock drills should be conducted to assess preparedness during emergency situations, she said, and suggested that special attention should be paid to the northern districts of Kozhikode and Wayanad. During the meeting, George asked health officials to carry out vigorous Nipah prevention activities in these districts on a campaign basis until the month of September. The minister asked the officials to intensify awareness drives in these districts through health centres but cautioned that the natural habitat of bats should not be destroyed.

# Students brew innovation with health-friendly green coffee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, May 28:** 'Green tea' has been a favourite drink of health-conscious people for quite some time, but what about making 'green coffee' popular? A group of Kerala students has now developed a new variety of health-friendly green coffee powder. Students from the Laurus Institute for Logistics in Kalamassery said, inspired by the popularity of green tea, they came out with green coffee powder, as part of a project at their institute. This new drink aims to cater to the growing demand for healthy options and capitalise on the increasing focus on health and wellness, they said. Rich in antioxidants, green coffee boosts metabolism and helps reduce diabetes, cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight, the students claimed. They also received a certificate from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for the product. Despite the widespread popularity of green tea, the students admitted that developing



a new brand of green coffee powder was a significant challenge. It was the 2020 batch of the institute that recognised the benefits of green coffee. The 30-member batch split into different groups and explored various concepts before settling on green coffee. A 10-member team was interested in making FMCG products, and they considered tea and coffee due to their global popularity.

Abhijith MV, a member of the project team, said they unexpectedly discovered green coffee beans while they were in Palakkad seeking the best suppliers. He said that although they sampled many other ready-made coffee powders, their focus remained on developing green coffee powder, which is not widely known. The supplier mentioned that sun-dried green coffee pods were

not in high demand, but the students were keen to learn about green coffee, Ajay Sankar, chairman of the institute, said. They brought the overlooked green coffee beans from Coorg and Palakkad to Kalamassery. In the second phase, they experimented by grinding the beans into different sizes, Sankar said. Multiple laboratory tests were conducted to determine the shelf life of the product, and finally, they decided to grind Arabica coffee

beans into small granules and pack them. Despite its many health benefits, the taste of green coffee was not particularly appealing, which concerned the students, the institute said in a statement. Attempts to enhance the flavour with mint, cardamom, rose, and so on were abandoned as they reduced the shelf life of green coffee to six months, it said. The students admitted that though 'Laurus Nature's Green Coffee' was showcased to health clubs, gyms, medical shops, business groups and so on, their initial response was not positive. Eventually customers were found by meeting each other personally and explaining the benefits of green coffee. The students are now motivated by the fact that customers continue to buy it after experiencing the benefits from at least two packs, the chairman added. Though the project was started by the 2020 batch, the green coffee project has been passed on to subsequent batches. Students continue to improve 'Laurus Nature's Green Coffee' through ongoing research, he added.





BJD leader and Rajya Sabha MP Mujibulla Khan campaigned among the Muslim community at Golarhat panchayat under Derabish block of Kendrapara district for party's Lok Sabha nominee Anshuman Mohanty and Patkura Assembly candidate Arabinda Mohapatra, Tuesday



Union Minister and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan participated in an election meeting at Patrajpur under Barchana Assembly constituency near Chandikhole in Jajpur district, Tuesday

## BJP sharpens attack as Patnaik's video surfaces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 28: The BJP Tuesday cited a video of BJD leader Kartik Pandian putting Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's trembling left hand behind the lectern during a campaign speech to reiterate its allegation that the former IAS officer was "controlling" the BJD president which followed a quick rebuttal by Patnaik who said "this won't work".

The BJP has been pushing this narrative during the ongoing polls that the bureaucrat-turned-politician of Tamil Nadu origin is "manipulating" an "ailing" Patnaik, 77, a charge repeatedly rebutted by the two leaders. As BJP leaders, including Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, fired a fresh salvo on BJD to push their line of attack, Patnaik hit back.

"I believe the BJP which is known for making non-issues into issues are (sic) discussing my hands. This will certainly not work," he said in a video message.

In the video, he is seen lifting his left hand and looking at it while recording his message, in an apparent counter to the BJP leaders who had posted visuals of his trembling hand.

Earlier, BJP leaders shared the clip of the speech in which Pandian, who was holding the microphone for the CM, is seen pushing the latter's hand behind the lectern, apparently to hide it from the public eye.

The Assam CM said on X, "This is a deeply distressing



**I believe the BJP which is known for making non-issues into issues are (sic) discussing my hands. This will certainly not work**

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

**This is a deeply distressing video. Shri VK Pandian ji is even controlling the hand movements of Shri Naveen Babu**

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

video. Shri VK Pandian ji is even controlling the hand movements of Shri Naveen Babu. I shudder to imagine the level of control a retired ex-bureaucrat from Tamil Nadu is currently exercising over the future of Odisha! BJP is determined to give back the reins of Odisha to the people of the State."

BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya said on X, "Naveen Patnaik ji has had a memorable tenure as Chief Minister. But now he is indisposed. It is however unfortunate how he is being pushed to keep up a facade. Odisha realises it. A graceful farewell to the veteran politician and BJD, in these elections, would be a befitting tribute."

Addressing an election rally in Bhadrak Lok Sabha constituency

Tuesday, Home Minister Amit Shah also attacked Pandian, without naming him.

Shah said BJP will ensure that the next chief minister is fluent in Odia, and understands the state's language, culture and tradition.

"Should a 'Tamil babu' run the government from behind the scene... By casting your vote in favour of the lotus symbol, bring a 'jan sevak' to rule the state in place of an officer," he said, in an apparent reference to Patnaik's close aide Pandian.

However, Patnaik has asserted that he is fit and fine, and has asked the BJP to stop lying.

Six Lok Sabha and 42 Assembly seats in the state will go to the polls in the last phase of elections June 1.

## 40K Bengali-speaking voters hold the key

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mahakalapa, May 28: All the major political parties are eyeing the votes of 40,000 Bengali-speaking citizens residing in this Assembly constituency under Mahakalapa block and 17 panchayats under Marshaghai block in the district. However, more than 40,000 Bengali-speaking voters are living in seaside panchayats like Batighara, Kharinasi, Rannagar, Jambu, Suniti, Nanjura, Kebidandura, Baulakani and Petachella in the district.

Meanwhile, leaders of all the political parties have pulled out all the stops to win the support of these Bengali-speaking people (read Bangladeshis). The ruling BJD has an edge over other parties in these panchayats. Nevertheless, the opposition BJP and Congress are leaving no stone unturned to grab the votes of the Bengali-speaking populace. The leaders of opposition BJP and Congress are holding frequent meetings with these residents and luring them to vote for their party candidates.

### MAHAKALAPARA ASSEMBLY SEGMENT



Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak Durga Prasanna Nayak Lokanath Maharathi

The residents in these seaside panchayats are mostly poor, wage earners, farmers, tribals and fishermen, said sources.

BJD's Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak, who has been a winner from this constituency since 2009, is also contesting this time. BJP has fielded Durga Prasanna Nayak while newcomer Lokanath Maharathi is the candidate of Indian National Congress.

Atanu is making his moves

cleverly by using his 24 years of experience while BJP candidate Durga Prasanna and his Congress counterpart are also swift in their moves and are trying to garner the votes from these seaside panchayats.

The candidates accompanied by their party workers were seen attending a series of evening meetings every day.

Meanwhile, members of the women self-help groups (SHGs) and women party workers are also not lagging behind and were seen canvassing for the candidates they support.

Migrant workers have also returned home ahead of the polls to exercise their franchise while the party candidates are approaching them vigorously. It is said that most of the party candidates have arranged for the return of the migrant workers from neighbouring states and have borne all the expenses.

## CEO orders probe into viral booth video

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 28: Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Odisha Nikunjia Bhari Dhal Tuesday ordered an investigation into the breaking of an electronic voting machine (EVM) allegedly by Prasanta Jagadev, a sitting MLA and also a BJP Assembly poll candidate.

On May 26, the police arrested Jagadev on the charge of vandalising the EVM inside a booth under Begunia Assembly segment where he had gone to cast vote during the Phase III of voting in the state on the day before. The CEO asked the Khurda

district election officer (DEO) to conduct an inquiry after a video relating to the incident came to its notice.

"It is viewed in the control rooms of CEO, DEOs, and Returning Officers. The DEO is the custodian of the web casting records. Hence, the DEO, Khurda, should conduct an immediate inquiry and clarify the matter," a release issued by the CEO's office said.

Jagadev was arrested based on an FIR lodged by the presiding officer of the booth. However, the MLA who had defected from the BJD to join the BJP rejected the allegation.

Meanwhile, Bhubaneswar MP and BJP Lok Sabha candidate Aparajita Sarangi shared the purported CCTV footage of the polling station which did not show Jagadev breaking the EVM.

Sarangi said the police were pressuring her driver Banamali to name Jagadev as the culprit.

The accused politician was returning from the booth in Sarangi's car driven by Banamali when the Jagadev was picked up.

Sarangi alleged that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik hatched a conspiracy to put the sitting lawmaker behind bars.

She said, "What is happening here is against the principles of

natural justice. An MP's vehicle is accosted and the sitting MLA is dragged out by the police and arrested. He has been languishing in jail for the last three days. Who is responsible for it?"

Police said Jagadev was allegedly seen manhandling a woman polling staff and the presiding officer in the webcasting system at the polling booth due to which the polling process was disrupted for some time.

Khurda SP Avinash Kumar said the police arrested Jagadev based on the FIR of the presiding officer. The police have sought verification of the CCTV footage of the booth, he said.

## BJP's 400+ claim 'nonsense': Kharge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, May 28: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge dismissed the BJP's '400 paar' claim as "bakwas", or nonsense and said the party will not cross 200 seats in the Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing media in Amritsar, Kharge said the BJP's seats were declining as compared to the last elections while the Congress and the INDIA bloc were making gains.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has been claiming that it will get over 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections.

Replying to a question on it, Kharge asked the basis of such claims by the BJP.

"When your (seats) are declining and ours are increasing. Forget '400 paar', it is 'bakwas'. They cannot even form the government and will not go beyond 200 seats," said Kharge.

Kharge said the BJP is "non-existent" in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Telangana and "not strong" in Karnataka.

"You are weak in Maharashtra, while in West Bengal and Odisha, there is a fight. How are you getting 400 seats?" he asked.

Kharge said, "I joined politics not for doing a job. I have been in politics to serve (people) since childhood, almost for as many years now as (PM Narendra) Modi's age," he stated.



OPCC president Sarat Pattanayak, Koraput MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati and other Congress leaders at a presser regarding the visit of AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for campaigning in Bhadrak, Tuesday

## Himachal's oldest voter laments loss of personal touch

AGENCIES

Shimla, May 28: Meeting people to garner support for polls is now a thing of the past and advanced technology has replaced the personal touch between voters and party leaders or workers seeking votes, said Himachal Pradesh's oldest voter.

Recalling memories from her past, 116-year-old Judhya Devi said instead of door-to-door visits that once defined political campaigns in her vil-

lage, mobile phones have now become the medium of contact for voters and party candidates contesting polls.

"Earlier party leaders contesting elections used to visit the voters and there was a personal connection between the voter and the candidate, but now votes are sought on phone," she said.

Judhya is the oldest voter in the state, an official of the Himachal Pradesh election department told PTI. Of the total 56,45,579 elec-

tors in the state, 1,31,642 are aged above, he added.

Life has been harsh for Judhya who has remained a widow for the past three decades. She lives with her youngest daughter Thakuri Devi, 58, also a widow, and her two sons in Kot village on the border of Bilaspur and Mandi districts, about 51 km from the state capital.

"Our times were good, people had time for each other. Principles, care for voters and personal contact connected

voters with their political leaders but now development and technology has replaced personal touch," said Thakuri, an Anganwadi worker, conveying her mother's sentiments.

Asked about her expectations from the party coming to power at the Centre, Thakuri said both she and her mother hoped that her sons who are now working in private companies land up government jobs so that they have a secure future.

Judhya has been unwell for

quite some time but still exercised her franchise by casting her vote in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls during a home voting procedure in a nearby house where she was taken in a vehicle.

Born January 1, 1908, Judhya has been a witness to the election process starting from the time when stamps were put on ballot paper to the use of EVMs followed by VVPAT.

Shyam Saran Negi, the first voter of Independent India and former icon of the Election

Commission of India, was a resident of Kalpa in the state's Kinnaur district. Negi, who died at the age of 105 November 5, 2022 is being missed in Lok Sabha polls 2024.

He had become the first voter of the country when elections were held October 25, 1951 in Kinnaur, ahead of other parts of the country which went to polls in February, 1952. Negi was a member of the polling team in 1951 and was first to cast his first vote in Shonthong polling station.



### of the day quote

The world is in a tense situation and the ongoing conflicts would not end so quickly and that's why India needs a stable government, a strong and powerful leader with networking, standing and respect

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

The adversaries of Lord Ram have always faced downfall regardless of their stature or power

YOGI ADITYANATH | CM, UTTAR PRADESH

The Congress has given the guarantee that we will transform the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana so that the farmers are the primary beneficiaries and they get the insurance within 30 days

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

## XPOST OF THE DAY

It happens only in Modi-RSS ruled India - @SamajwadiParty Legislator from Meerut arrested - for creating a Traffic Jam...in 1995! This Govt will find new creative ways to put you in Jail. And if nothing else works, they will call you a "Naxal!"

KALESHIBUA

### SHORT TAKES

#### Fire breaks out at eye hospital

New Delhi: A fire broke out at a private eye hospital in west Delhi's Paschim Vihar area Tuesday, officials said. No one was injured in the incident as people were safely evacuated from the building, they said. A call was received regarding the incident at 11.35 am. The fire broke out at the second floor of Eye Mantra Hospital, a Delhi Fire Services official said. Six fire tenders were pressed into service and the blaze was doused by 12.30 pm, the official said, adding that the cooling operation is underway.

#### Court sends Bibhav to 3-day police custody

New Delhi: A court here Tuesday granted three day to Delhi Police for custodial interrogation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar, who has been accused of assaulting AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal. Maliwal was allegedly assaulted at the Chief Minister's official residence May 13. Metropolitan Magistrate Gaurav Goyal sent Kumar to police custody till May 31.

#### Court dismisses Khalid's bail plea

New Delhi: A special court here Tuesday rejected the bail plea of former JNU student Umar Khalid who is an accused in the larger conspiracy case linked to the 2020 northeast Delhi communal riots, saying its previous order dismissing his first application had attained finality. This was Khalid's second regular bail plea. He has been booked under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

#### Three Lankans held for smuggling gold

New Delhi: Three Sri Lankan men have been arrested at the international airport here for allegedly trying to smuggle into the country gold, valuing about ₹1.23 crore, the customs department said Tuesday.



Unless we understand the economic and social hierarchies, which mirror each other, and reorient our policies towards the bottom, especially the SCs, STs and other depressed sections, it will not be possible to call us an egalitarian society

P CHIDAMBARAM | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

### RAINS LASH ASSAM

Three persons, including a woman, were killed and 17 others injured in separate incidents in Assam Tuesday as heavy rain accompanied by strong winds lashed the state in the aftermath of cyclone Remal, officials said



### DEFAMATION CASE

# Spat over summon to Atishi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 28: A war of word erupted between AAP and BJP Tuesday after a city court summoned Delhi minister Atishi in a defamation case May 29 over her poaching charge against the saffron party, with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleging there was a plan to arrest her. The BJP hit back at Kejriwal and Atishi, claiming their "lies" will be exposed in the court.

A defiant Atishi said in a press conference that "Operation Lotus" was a well-known tactic of the BJP and questioned how the party managed to form governments in many states without having a majority.

The Rouse Avenue court earlier in the day summoned Atishi Wednesday in connection with the criminal defamation case filed by Delhi BJP leader Praveen Shankar Kapoor. However, it refused to summon the Delhi Chief Minister in the matter. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Tanya Bamniyal, summoned Atishi saying "prima facie" there was sufficient evidence against her in the matter.

Despite accusing the BJP of trying to poach AAP MLAs, neither Kejriwal nor Atishi had produced any evidence and also



### COURT REFUSES TO SUMMON KEJRIWAL

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court Tuesday refused to summon Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a criminal complaint filed by a BJP leader who accused him of defamation for claiming that AAP leaders were approached to join the saffron party in return for cash. The judge directed Atishi, a minister in the Kejriwal cabinet, to appear before the court June 29. BJP leader Praveen Shankar Kapoor had filed a case against Kejriwal and Atishi over poaching allegations made by the two.



did not join a probe into the matter by the Delhi Police on a complaint by the Delhi BJP leaders.

Reacting to the court's summons to Atishi, Kejriwal said in a post on X, "I had said earlier that they will arrest Atishi next. They are planning to do so now. Complete dictatorship."

"In completely flimsy, frivolous and false cases, they are ar-

resting ALL leaders of AAP one by one. Every single opposition leader will be arrested if Modi ji comes back to power."

Atishi questioned the BJP as to why cases of corruption against political leaders were withdrawn after they joined the party. "I want to know from the BJP how they formed the governments in Goa, Manipur and

Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh without a majority. Operation Lotus of BJP is well known," she said.

Sachdeva hit back at Kejriwal saying whenever he faces corruption charges or he has to divert any issue, he starts alleging that his MLAs are being poached and his government is being toppled.

His minister Atishi even claimed that an offer was made to her by the BJP to switch sides, he said.

"We had warned them earlier because they were lying and a notice of defamation was sent to them asking them to apologise. Now the court has summoned Atishi and their lies will be exposed and she will also be punished," he said.

Kejriwal had earlier charged that seven AAP MLAs were contacted and offered ₹25 crore each to defect to the BJP.

The AAP chief had also alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched to arrest him in the alleged liquor scam and topple his government in Delhi.

In April, Atishi held a press conference in which she claimed that the BJP approached her through a person very close to her to join the party, alleging she was threatened with arrest by the Enforcement Directorate if she refused.

# Hospital fire: LG orders ACB probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 28: Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena Tuesday ordered a comprehensive Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) probe into the registration and regulatory management of all private nursing homes in the wake of the deadly neonatal hospital fire in Vivek Vihar, even as the police summoned the health facility owner's wife and seven others staff members for questioning.

Saxena said the incident, which claimed the lives of six newborns, has brought out the "sheer mismanagement, criminal neglect and connivance of officials of the health department" in granting and renewing registrations of nursing homes.

As part of its probe, Delhi Police has summoned Jagriti, the wife of hospital owner Dr Naveen Khichi. She is a dentist and also a co-owner of the facility.

Besides, seven other staff members, including nurses, who were on duty on Saturday night when the incident occurred, have been called for questioning.

Police sources said they have also asked two dozen hospital staff members to submit their degrees to ascertain whether they are qualified to work at a neonatal facility.

They said that Naveen Khichi

and Dr Aaksh, who have been arrested in the case, showed "remorse" during questioning.

While Khichi "accepted flouting norms", he claimed that he had to keep more beds as the number of patients arriving at the hospitals was increasing and there was no objection from authorities, the sources said.

"He (Khichi) told us said the number of admissions was not increased intentionally but he increased the beds when the demand increased over the last three years. He used to charge ₹4,000-₹6,000 for a normal bed and up to ₹8,000 for ventilators," a senior police officer said.

The police are likely to take Khichi to Jaipur Wednesday as he had fled to the city after the incident, the officer said, adding that Aaksh during interrogation said that he helped in the rescue operation but fled the spot as he was scared of the people. Investigators have already seized the mobile phones of the accused.

"We have taken their mobile phones to know about the call records and messages shared between them."

"We will also check that if any message was later deleted," another senior police officer privy to the investigation said, adding, if need be, the mobile phones of other staff members will also be checked.

### SNIPPETS

#### Fire engulfs forest area in Shimla

Shimla/ Hamirpur: Himachal Pradesh has witnessed 991 forest fire incidents since the onset of summers with two incidents of forest fires reported in Shimla and Hamirpur district Tuesday, officials said. A massive fire broke out in a forest in Shimla's Tutikandi area around 11.30 am and reached a government building, officials said. No casualties have been reported so far. In Hamirpur, the drinking water supply in the town was disrupted as the main pump house was damaged in a forest fire, they said.

#### CBI, ED oppose K Kavitha's bail pleas

New Delhi: The CBI and the ED Tuesday opposed in the Delhi High Court the bail pleas of BRS leader K Kavitha in the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged excise policy scam, saying she was "highly influential and powerful" to influence the witnesses. Countering the submission made on behalf of Kavitha that she, being a woman, be released on bail, the probe agencies contended she played a key role in the conspiracy behind the "scam" and, being an active politician and a member of the Telangana legislative council, she cannot seek parity with "vulnerable" women.

#### Dramatic scenes at Delhi airport

New Delhi: A Varanasi-bound IndiGo flight received a bomb threat at the airport here Tuesday morning but a search of the aircraft found it to be a hoax, officials said. Dramatic scenes unfolded at the Indira Gandhi International Airport as the 176 passengers onboard the IndiGo flight were evacuated via the emergency exits following the bomb threat. In one of the evacuation videos that went viral on social media, the pilot is seen sliding out of the aircraft using the emergency slides, indicating the tense moments after the threat. In another video, an elderly passenger is seen coming out through an emergency exit of the aircraft with the help of a crew member.

#### 15 Naxalites arrested after IED blast

Dantewada: Fifteen Naxalites, seven of them women, were arrested following an IED blast in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district, police said Tuesday. The Naxalites triggered the explosion when the security forces were on a search operation Sunday, but no one was injured, they said. The Naxalites were apprehended near Gumalnar village under Geedam police station limits, where a joint team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Bastar Fighters, both units of state police, was out on a search operation Sunday. Dantewada Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Unnati Thakur told reporters.



FLOOD FURY: Villagers shift cows to safe place from flood-hit Baldakhal village after the landfall of the Cyclone Remal, on the outskirts of Agartala

# Ram Rahim acquitted in 2002 murder case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, May 28: The Punjab and Haryana High Court Tuesday acquitted Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and four others in the murder case of the sect's former manager Ranjit Singh in 2002.

The Sirda-headquartered sect chief, who is also serving a 20-year jail term for raping two of his disciples, is currently lodged in Sunaria jail in Rohtak, Haryana. "The high court has acquitted him and four others in the Ranjit Singh murder case,"



Dera chief's lawyer Jitender Khurana said.

He said the arguments in the case had got over earlier and the matter came up for pronouncement of verdict before the high court Tuesday.

Khurana said a division bench of Justice Sureshwar Thakur and Justice Lalit Batra

pronounced the decision on the appeals filed by Ram Rahim and four others who had been convicted by a special CBI court in Panchkula, Haryana, in October 2021.

The court had sentenced them to life imprisonment in the nearly 20-year-old murder case of Ranjit Singh. He had been held guilty of hatching a criminal conspiracy with his co-accused. Ranjit Singh, who was also a follower of the sect, was shot dead July 10, 2002, at Khanpur Kolian village in Haryana's Kurukshetra.

# CBI slaps attempt to murder charges against Shahjahan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 28: The CBI has charged suspended TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh, his brother and five others with criminal conspiracy and attempt to murder in connection with a mob attack on an Enforcement Directorate team in Sandeshkhali January 5, officials said Tuesday.

The agency's first charge sheet in the case was filed Monday before a Basirhat special court, they said. The ED team came under attack from a 1,000-strong mob when it went to raid Sheikh's house in connection with the multi-crore ration distribution scam in West Bengal. It had also gone to arrest Sheikh because of his alleged close links with arrested former state food minister Jyoti Priya Mallick, under the scanner in the scam, they said.

The charge sheet is against seven people, including Sheikh, his brother Alomgir and associates Jiauddin Mollah, Mafujar Mollah, and Didarbaksh Mollah, they said. The CBI has invoked Indian Penal Code Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 307 (attempt to murder) on the accused besides rioting and unlawful assembly among a number of other charges, they said.

Sandeshkhali, has been in the news after local women alleged land-grabbing and sexual abuse by Sheikh and his men, who are involved in fish farming and trading.

# Blood cancer cases may be rising among young adults: Experts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 28: Chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML) -- a rare, yet treatable type of blood cancer -- is significantly rising among young adults, aged 30 to 40 years, in India, warned doctors Tuesday.

CML affects the bone marrow and is characterised by the uncontrolled growth of white blood cells (WBC), specifically granulocytes, in the bone marrow.

Globally, CML affects a significant number of people, with estimates ranging between 1.2 to 1.5 million individuals.

Despite its prevalence, CML remains relatively rare compared to other forms of leukaemia, comprising nearly 15 per cent of all leukaemia cases. A recent study published in the

journal Lancet showed that the condition is found in much younger persons, with the majority of patients being diagnosed between the age of 30 to 40 years, in India.

In comparison, the average age of diagnosis in Western countries is 64 years.

"In my practice, I see about 5-10 new patients being diagnosed with CML every month, with an additional 10-15 patients coming in for follow-up," K. S. Nataraj, Senior Haematologist and Haemato-Oncologist, HCG Comprehensive Cancer Care Hospital, Bengaluru, told IANS.

Globally, CML affects a significant number of people, with estimates ranging between 1.2 to 1.5 million individuals



"This high number is largely because more people are nowadays diagnosed on time, as they regularly go for general check-ups and doctors advise testing,

for example, when suspiciously high WBC counts are detected," he added. CML is largely curable if diagnosed and treated in the early stages.



# international



I would like to thank all brothers and sisters for sticking to their posts and protecting national security. In recent days in response to the Chinese military exercises, everyone did a good job  
LAI CHING-TE | PRESIDENT, TAIWAN

## POPE FRANCIS APOLOGISES

Pope Francis apologised Tuesday after he was quoted using a vulgar term about gays to reaffirm the Catholic Church's ban on gay priests. Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni issued a statement acknowledging the media storm that erupted about Francis' comments, which were delivered behind closed doors to Italian bishops May 20



## of the day quote

(The) peace summit needs President Biden and so do the other leaders who look at the reaction of the United States. Putin will only applaud his absence personally applaud it and standing, at that  
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIYY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

On this historic day, in 1998, PM Nawaz Sharif demonstrated bold leadership by rejecting nerve-racking pressures and inducements to make Pakistan a nuclear-armed nation  
SHEHBAZ SHARIF | PM, PAKISTAN

Russia's intelligence helped them know where everything was. Iran helped get them trained. So this isn't Hamas. These are all murderers and accomplices  
NIKKI HALEY | EX-GOVERNOR, SOUTH CAROLINA



From left, Belgium's Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Belgium's Defense Minister Ludwina Dedonder receive a briefing on an F-16 at Melsbroek military airport in Brussels. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy Tuesday will get a look at F-16 jets Belgium will send to Ukraine as of later this year and receive more security commitments while European Union defense ministers will again seek to overcome Hungarian objections to send billions of euros in military aid to Kyiv

## 21 dead after Israeli tanks hit Rafah evacuation zone

REUTERS

Cairo, May 28: Israeli strikes on a tent camp in an evacuation area west of Rafah killed at least 21 Tuesday, Gaza health authorities said, and tanks advanced to the centre of the southern Gaza city for the first time after a night of heavy bombardment.

At least 12 of the dead were women, according to medical officials in the Hamas militant-run Palestinian enclave. An Israeli military spokesperson said: "As of this time, we are not aware of this incident."

International unease over Israel's three-week-old Rafah offensive has turned to outrage after an attack Sunday set off a blaze in a tent camp in a western district of the city, killing at least 45 people.

Israel said it had targeted Hamas commanders and had not intended to cause civilian casualties.

Around one million people, many repeatedly displaced by



shifting waves of the war, have fled the Israeli offensive in Rafah since early May, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) reported Tuesday. ISRAEL SAYS IT'S IN COMBAT NEAR EGYPT BORDER

Since Israel launched its incursion by seizing control of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt three weeks ago, tanks had probed around the outskirts and entered some eastern districts but had not yet rumbled into the city in full force.

Witnesses in central Rafah said the Israeli military appeared to have brought in remote-operated armoured vehicles and there was no immediate sign of personnel in or around them. An Israeli military spokesperson had no immediate comment.

## SHORT TAKES

### Malta's ex-leaders plead not guilty

Valletta: Malta's former Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat, and other former top officials pleaded not guilty in court Tuesday to charges in a hospital corruption scandal that is roiling the Mediterranean island nation as it prepares for European Parliament elections. The case involves a deal, originally struck in 2015, in which the management of three of the country's hospitals was handed over to a private company. The concessionaire changed in 2018.

### Powerful storms kill 23 across US

Pennsylvania: A possible tornado damaged a school and homes in Pennsylvania, the latest in a series of powerful storms that swept much of the US during the Memorial Day holiday weekend and killed at least 23 people. No injuries were reported, but there was roof damage Monday night to the high school and about six homes in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, said David Truskowsky, spokesperson for the city's fire department. School was canceled in the district Tuesday. The city is about 70 miles northeast of Harrisburg, the state capital. The National Weather Service, which had issued a tornado warning for the area, planned to survey the storm damage Tuesday morning.

### Indonesia braces for droughts, fires

Jakarta: Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) Tuesday warned of potential droughts and peatland fires as the dry season is already starting in some regions of the archipelago. The head of BMKG, Dwikorita Karnawati, has said that 19 per cent of Indonesia's territory entered the dry season, particularly Aceh, North Sumatra, Riau, West Java, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Xinhua news agency reported.

### Aid deliveries suspended

Washington: A US built temporary pier that had been used to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza was damaged by rough seas and has temporarily suspended operations, three US officials told The Associated Press Tuesday. The Joint Logistics Over The Shore, or JLOTS, pier only began operations in the past two weeks and had provided an additional way to get critically needed food to Gaza. The setback is the latest for the \$320 million pier, which has already had three US service member injuries and had four if its vessels beached due to heavy seas.

## EU RIFT WITH ISRAEL WIDENS

# Spain, Norway and Ireland recognise Palestinian state

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, May 28: Spain, Norway and Ireland formally recognised a Palestinian state Tuesday in a coordinated effort by the three western European nations to add international pressure on Israel to soften its devastating response to last year's Hamas-led attack. Tel Aviv slammed the diplomatic move that will have no immediate impact on its grinding war in Gaza.

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz quickly lashed out at Spain on X, saying Sánchez's government was "being complicit in inciting genocide against Jews and war crimes".

Ireland and Norway soon joined Spain in formalizing a decision they had jointly announced the previous week.

The Palestinian flag was raised in Dublin outside Leinster House, the seat of the Irish parliament.

"This is an important moment and I think it sends a signal to the world that there are practical actions you can take as a country to help keep the hope and destination of a two-state solution alive at a time when others are trying to sadly bomb it into oblivion," Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris said before his Cabinet meets to formally sign off on the decision.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said in a statement that "for more than 30 years, Norway has been one of the strongest advocates for a Palestinian state. Today, when



Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares, Norway's Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide and Ireland's Foreign Minister Micheal Martin gesture after a press conference in Brussels, Belgium

Norway officially recognises Palestine as a state, is a milestone in the relationship between Norway and Palestine."

After Monday's meeting of EU foreign ministers, Irish Foreign Minister Micheal Martin said "for the first time at an EU meeting, in a real way, I have seen a significant discussion on sanctions" for Israel.

Harris, the Irish leader, insisted Tuesday the EU should consider economic sanctions for Israel, saying "Europe could be doing a hell of a lot more".

Norway, which is not an EU member but often aligns its foreign policy with the bloc, handed diplomatic papers to the Palestinian government over

the weekend ahead of its formal recognition.

At the same time, the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell threw his weight behind the International Criminal Court, whose prosecutor is seeking an arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others, including leaders of the Hamas militant group. Last week's joint announcement by Spain, Ireland and Norway triggered an angry response from Israeli authorities, which summoned the countries' ambassadors in Tel Aviv to the Foreign Ministry, where they were filmed while being shown videos of the October 7 Hamas attack and abductions.

This is a historic decision that has a single goal, and that is to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve peace  
PEDRO SÁNCHEZ | PM, SPAIN

## SNIPPETS

### Judge nixes bid to restrict Trump statements

Washington: The judge overseeing Donald Trump's classified documents case in Florida Tuesday denied prosecutors' request to bar the former President from making public statements that could endanger law enforcement agents participating in the prosecution. US District Judge Aileen Cannon said in her order that prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith's team didn't give defence lawyers adequate time to discuss the request before it was filed Friday evening. The request followed a distorted claim by Trump last week that the FBI agents who searched his Mar-a-Lago estate in August 2022 were "authorised to shoot me" and were "locked & loaded ready to take me out & put my family in danger."

### Qalibaf re-elected as speaker of Iran's Parl

Dubai: Iran's Parliament re-elected hard-liner Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf Tuesday as its speaker, reaffirming its hard-right makeup in the wake of a helicopter crash that killed the country's president and foreign minister. Of 287 lawmakers voting, 198 backed Qalibaf to retain the position he first took in 2021. He initially became speaker following a string of failed presidential bids and 12 years as the leader of Iran's capital city, in which he built onto Tehran's subway and supported the construction of modern high-rises. Many, however, know Qalibaf for his support, as a Revolutionary Guard general, for a violent crackdown on Iranian university students in 1999. He also reportedly ordered live gunfire to be used against Iranian students in 2003 while serving as the country's police chief.

### Nawaz Sharif re-elected as PML-N president

Lahore: Nawaz Sharif was re-elected "unopposed" as the President of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party Tuesday, six years after the three-time former Prime Minister was forced to quit the post following a Supreme Court ruling in the Panama Papers case. The 74-year-old veteran politician, who returned to Pakistan in October last year after a four-year self-imposed exile in the UK, was elected without a contest in the party's general council meeting held here. PML-N election commissioner Rana Sanaullah told the general council that only Nawaz was nominated for the slot of the party president. Sanaullah sought the approval from the members of the general council who stood on their seats to endorse his nomination. They chanted slogans in his favour.

### China praises Bangladesh PM Hasina

Beijing: China Tuesday praised Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her decision to deny permission for a foreign military base, commending it as a reflection of the Bangladeshi people's strong national spirit and commitment to independence. Without naming any country, Hasina, 76, Sunday said that she was offered a hassle-free re-election in the January 7 polls if she allowed a foreign country to build an airbase inside Bangladesh territory. Hasina, ruling the strategically located South Asian nation since 2009, secured a fifth overall term in the one-sided election in January, which was boycotted by the main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by former prime minister Khalida Zia.

# How to predict landslides to save lives

THE CONVERSATION

Sydney, May 28: A devastating landslide struck several remote villages in the mountainous Enga province in Papua New Guinea late last week.

While it is too early for official confirmation, estimates place the death toll between 690 and 2,000 people, with thousands more missing. That only a few bodies have been recovered serves as a tragic reminder of the destructive power of these events. The ongoing search and rescue operations have proven challenging.

As often with landslides, secondary slides and rock falls are hampering efforts in the search zone. There's also a lack of access to heavy digging machinery, and roads need to be cleared or repaired for assistance and equipment to arrive.

Even more critically, it is difficult to locate potential survivors, as landslides carry away



buildings and their occupants in an unpredictable manner. What causes these devastating events and why are they so sudden and unpredictable?

### WHAT CAUSES LANDSLIDES?

Landslides happen when the pull from gravity exceeds the strength of the geomaterial forming the slope of a hill or mountain. Geomaterials can be as varied as rocks, sand, silt and clays.

Then, part of this slope starts sliding downhill. Depending on where the slope fails, the material sliding down can be just a few cubic metres or a few million cubic metres in volume.

### WHY DO SLOPES FAIL?

Most natural landslides are triggered by earthquakes or rainfall, or a combination of both.

Earthquakes shake the ground, stress it and weaken it over time. Rainwater can seep through the ground and soak it – the ground is often porous like a sponge – and add weight to the slope. This is why PNG is so prone to landslides, as it sits on an active fault and is subjected to heavy rainfalls.

Unfortunately, all the money in the world can't buy accurate landslide predictions – especially in remote parts of the world

### WHY CAN'T WE PREDICT LANDSLIDES?

It's very difficult to predict and mitigate landslide risk effectively. The Enga landslide and the thousands of deadly and costly landslides occurring every year worldwide suggest so. Even in Australia – the flattest continent in the world – home insurance policies don't tend to cover landslide risk for a simple reason: this risk is difficult to

estimate. So what would it take to warn people of a coming landslide? You would need a prediction for earthquakes and rainfall, in addition to a perfect knowledge of the slope-forming geomaterial. Under our feet, geomaterials may include multiple, entangled layers of various kinds of rocks and particulate materials, such as sand, silt and clays. Their strength varies from a factor of one to 1,000, and their spatial distribution dictates where the slope is likely to fail.

To accurately assess the stability of the slope, a three-dimensional mapping of these materials and their strengths is needed. No sensor can provide this information, so geologists and geotechnical engineers must deal with partial information obtained at a few selected locations and extrapolate this data to the rest of the slope.

The weakest link of the chain – such as an existing fracture in a rock mass – is easily missed.

## UNP proposes to postpone elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, May 28: The United National Party headed by Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe Tuesday suggested holding a referendum to postpone both presidential and general elections and extending the terms of both offices for two years to pursue much-needed economic reforms, a proposal that was immediately criticised by the opposition parties as unconstitutional.

The island nation's Elections Commission earlier this month said the presidential election would be conducted between September 17 and October 16.

United National Party (UNP) general secretary Palitha Range Bandara presented a proposal to postpone both the presidential and general elections by two years and emphasised that if circumstances warrant, this proposal can be formally submitted to Parliament, paving the way for a referendum, news portal NewsFirst.lk reported.

"The UNP General Secretary highlighted a pivotal moment in Sri Lanka's history. The nation faced economic adversity, but resolute measures were taken to steer it away from the brink. These efforts yielded significant victories," Bandara told reporters here.

Incidentally, President Wickremesinghe, 75, last week reiterated his intention to hold the next presidential election this year ahead of the parliamentary election.





**Internal work is going on...we will explore inorganic growth in health insurance**  
**SIDDHARTHA MOHANTY**  
LIC CHAIRMAN

## AVERAGE AIR TICKET PRICES SPIKE 9% IN JAN-MARCH

Average air ticket prices in India spiked 9 per cent in the first quarter of 2024, primarily on account of general increase in travel demand and 'much stronger' economic growth, according to Australian Securities Exchange-listed FCM Travel. At the same time, FCM Travel said there was a 20 per cent jump in the premium class bookings in the January-March period compared to the same period last year, driven by sectors such as manufacturing IT as well as conglomerates.



## of the day quote

We are working towards bridging the tech and skill gap, helping farmers and businesses reduce food loss and improve food security in the Indian cold chain



**RAVICHANDRAN PURUSHOTHAMAN**  
PRESIDENT, DANFOSS INDIA

Our technology-led solutions are differentiating us in the marketplace as we embark on deploying AI at scale in our customer engagements across the USA, Europe and India



**RAVI VISWANATHAN**  
TVS SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTIONS LTD MD

We remain optimistic about the future of all the businesses and are confident in our ability to continue delivering value to all our stakeholders



**RASHMI SALUJA**  
RELIGARE ENTERPRISES LTD EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON

# Big Tech opposes India's EU-like antitrust proposal

India's 'Digital Competition Bill' is on the lines of EU's landmark Digital Markets Act 2022



REUTERS

**New Delhi, May 28:** A US lobby group representing tech giants Google, Amazon and Apple has asked India to rethink its proposed EU-like competition law, arguing regulations against data use and preferential treatment of partners could raise user costs, a letter shows.

Citing increasing market power of a few big digital companies in India, a government panel in February proposed imposing obligations on them under a new antitrust law which will complement existing regulations whose enforcement the panel said is 'time-consuming'. India's 'Digital Competition Bill' is on the lines of EU's landmark Digital Markets Act 2022. It will apply to big firms, including those with a global turnover of over \$30 billion and whose digital services have at least 10 million users locally, bringing some of the world's biggest tech firms under its ambit.

It proposes to prohibit com-

panies from exploiting non-public data of its users and promoting their own services over rivals, and also abolish restrictions on downloading of third-party apps.

Companies deploy these strategies to launch new product features and boost security for users, and curbing them will hit their plans, the US-India Business Council (USIBC), part of the US Chamber of Commerce, said in a May 15 letter to India's Corporate Affairs Ministry, which is working on the law.

The draft Indian law is "much further in scope" than the EU's, says the letter, which has not been made public but was seen by Reuters.

"Targeted companies are likely to reduce investment in India, pass on increased prices for digital services, and reduce the range of services," it says.

The USIBC, which has asked India to reconsider the planned law, did not respond to Reuters queries, and neither did the Corporate Affairs Ministry, Apple, Amazon or Google.

With a population of 1.4 billion people and a growing affluent class, India is a lucrative market for big tech companies. Apple CEO Tim Cook said this month the company posted a 'revenue record' in India during the March quarter, when its overall global revenue declined 4%.

The Indian panel says the new law is needed as a few large digital enterprises 'wield immense control over the market.' As in the EU, it is recommending a penalty of up to 10% of a company's annual global turnover for violations.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has for years been investigating big tech firms.

The CCI in 2022 fined Google \$161 million, ordering it to stop restricting users from removing its pre-installed apps and allow downloads without using its app store. Google denies wrongdoing and says such restrictions boost user security.

Amazon is also facing an antitrust investigation for favouring select sellers on its India website, an allegation it denies. Apple, too, denies allegations but faces an investigation for alleged abuse of its dominant position in the apps market.

A group of 40 Indian start-ups, though, has come out in support of the new Indian law, saying it can help address monopolistic practices of dominant digital platforms and create a level playing field for smaller companies.

There is no fixed timeline, but the Indian government will next review feedback on the proposal before seeking parliament approval with or without changes.

## Strong fundamentals behind share market rally, say experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 28:** The current spurt in the stock market is on account of strong fundamentals and robust corporate earnings and retail investors can look for buying opportunities to accumulate quality stocks, experts said.

The benchmark Sensex Monday scaled 76,000 level for the first time while the Nifty hit a new lifetime peak of 23,110.80.

Last week also, the stock market benchmarks Nifty 50 and Sensex touched their respective all-time highs on two occasions.

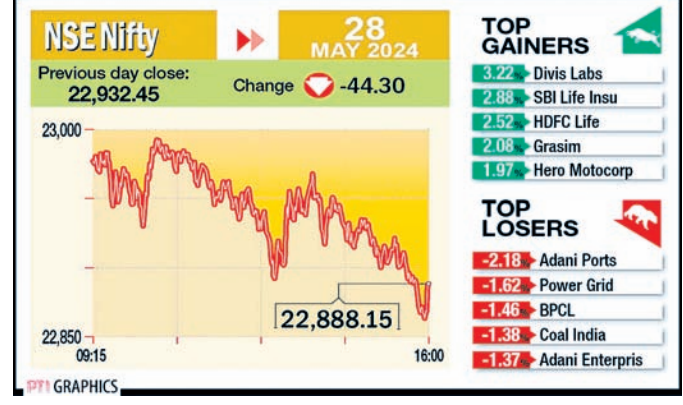
Experts said corporate balance sheets are very clean now compared to 5 years ago. Most of the corporates have deleveraged their balance sheet and have scope for capacity expansion.

"The recent rally in the Indian market is supported by strong domestic macroeconomic fundamentals, like GDP growth, and manufacturing PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index). Even inflation is also largely stable," Narendra Solanki, Head Fundamental Research- Investment Services, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers, said.

Wealth management company The Infinity Group, Founder & Director, Vinnaayak Mehta said, "diversifying portfolios, investing in quality stocks with strong fundamentals, and avoiding speculative trading can help mitigate risks".

"It is crucial to avoid making short-term investments... Instead, focus on long-term investment horizons of at least two to three years," Mehta said. The volatility is expected to persist until the final phase of the election June 1. However, despite these fluctuations, a major correction in the market before the election results is unlikely as the markets have already factored in potential outcomes, he said.

## Stock markets fall for 3rd day ahead of poll results



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 28:** Extending the falling streak to the third day in a row, benchmark BSE Sensex declined by 220 points in volatile trade Tuesday due to profit-taking in power, oil and capital goods shares ahead of results of Lok Sabha polls.

After gyrating between gains and losses during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 220.05 points or 0.29 per cent lower at 75,170.45. During the day, it hit a high of 75,585.40 and a low of 75,083.22. The NSE Nifty dropped 44.30 points or 0.19 per cent to settle at 22,888.15 despite beginning the day on a positive note.

Analysts said that stock markets are witnessing 'buying on dips and sell on rallies' amid uncertainty ahead of the general poll results. Sensex and Nifty scaled lifetime highs on Monday but closed lower due to heavy profit taking at the flag-end.

From the Sensex pack, Power Grid, NTPC, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Maruti were among the laggards. Asian Paints, Wipro, JSW Steel, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finserv and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the

biggest gainers. "The Indian market exhibited mild consolidation post the recent sharp surge. The uncertainty-led volatility is likely to continue as the market approaches the election outcome," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Analysts said mid- and small-caps underperformed, while defensive sectors like pharma and FMCG were optimistic.

"Nifty ended lower for third day in a row on Tuesday. Nervousness ahead of the election results is on the rise as is evident from the poor advance-decline ratio and falling volumes," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 1.09 per cent and midcap index declined 0.63 per cent.

Among the indices, realty dropped 2.22 per cent. Power (1.86 per cent), utilities (1.55 per cent), services (1.37 per cent), telecommunication (1.26 per cent), industrials (1.08 per cent) and capital goods (0.95 per cent) were among the laggards.

Healthcare index emerged as the only gainer. As many as 2,510 stocks declined while 1,321 advanced and 102 remained unchanged on the BSE.

## Q4 RESULTS CORNER

### GIC Re net profit rises to ₹2,642cr

**New Delhi:** GIC Re Tuesday posted a 3 per cent increase in net profit to ₹2,642 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024 compared to ₹2,564 crore in the same quarter a year earlier. During the quarter, the company collected a gross premium of ₹8,724 against ₹7,370 crore in the year-ago period, GIC Re said in a regulatory filing. Total income of the re-insurer, however, declined to ₹9,157 crore in the March quarter compared to ₹9,259 crore in the same quarter a year ago. The net commission improved to ₹1,491 crore compared to ₹824 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal. For the entire 2023-24, GIC Re recorded a 3 per cent rise in net profit to ₹6,497 crore from ₹6,313 crore in the preceding financial year.

### NBCC profit grows 26% to ₹136cr

**New Delhi:** State-owned construction firm NBCC Ltd Tuesday reported a 26 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit to ₹136.08 crore for the quarter ended March 2024. Its net profit stood at ₹108.4 crore in the year-ago period. Income from operations rose to ₹4,024.5 crore in the fourth quarter of the last fiscal as compared to ₹2,813.35 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing. During the 2023-24 fiscal, net profit rose to ₹401.55 crore from ₹266.66 crore in the preceding year. Income from operations grew to ₹10,432.63 crore in the last fiscal as against ₹8876.36 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal.

### Amara Raja Energy net profit up 62%

**New Delhi:** Amara Raja Energy & Mobility Tuesday said its consolidated profit after tax rose 62 per cent to ₹230 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The company had reported a profit after tax of ₹142 crore in the January-March quarter of 2022-23 fiscal. Revenue from operations rose to ₹2,908 crore for the fourth quarter as against ₹2,433 crore in the year-ago period, Amara Raja Energy & Mobility said in a regulatory filing. For the year ended on March 31, 2024, the company reported a profit after tax of ₹934 crore as against ₹731 crore in the 2022-23 financial year. Revenue from operations for the last fiscal rose to ₹11,708 crore as compared to ₹10,392 crore in FY23.

## Link PAN with Aadhaar by May 31: I-T dept

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 28:** The income tax department Tuesday asked taxpayers to link PAN with Aadhaar by May 31 to avoid tax deduction at a higher rate.

As per income tax rules, if a Permanent Account Number (PAN) is not linked with biometric Aadhaar, TDS is required to be deducted at double the applicable rate.

Last month, the income tax department issued a circular stating that no action will be taken for short deduction of TDS in case the assessee links his/her PAN with Aadhaar by May 31. "Please link your PAN with Aadhaar before May 31, 2024, if you haven't already, in order to avoid tax deduction at a higher rate," the department posted on X.

In a separate post, the I-T department asked reporting entities, including banks, forex dealers, to file SFT by May 31 to avoid penalties.

"The deadline to file SFT (Statement of Specified Financial Transactions) is May 31, 2024. Avoid penalties by filing accurately and on time," the department said.

The reporting entities which are required to file SFT returns with tax authorities include forex dealers, banks, sub-registrar, NBFC, post offices, issuer of bonds/debentures, mutual fund trustees, company paying dividend or buying back shares.

These specified institutions are required to furnish the details of certain financial transactions or any reportable account registered/recorded/maintained by them during the year.

Delay in filing of SFT returns may attract a penalty of up to ₹1,000 for each day of default. Non-filing or filing inaccurate statement may also lead to levy of penalty. Through SFT, the income tax department keeps a track of high value transactions undertaken by an individual.

## Banks' credit growth in FY25 to slow down: Crisil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 28:** Domestic rating agency Crisil Tuesday said the banking system's credit growth will drop by 2 percentage points to 14 per cent in financial year 2024-25.

The slowdown will be due to lower GDP growth at 6.8 per cent in FY25, as against 7.6 per cent in FY24, RBI measures like higher risk weights on unsecured loans and also a high base, the agency said.

Slower deposit accretion can keep a check on credit growth, the agency said, admitting that the differential between the deposit and credit growth has reduced over the past year.

It said financial year 2024-25 witnessed a 16 per cent growth in bank credit, if one were to exclude the impact of the HDFC merger, and attributed the same to strong economic activity and higher retail demand.

"This fiscal growth will be tempered by a high base effect, a revision in risk weights and a somewhat lower gross domes-



tic product (GDP) growth," the agency said.

It was quick to add that the fundamental drivers of credit demand are broadly intact and a revival in private corporate capital expenditure (capex), especially towards the second half of fiscal 2025, can provide tailwinds as well.

The corporate segment, which accounts for 45 per cent of the

overall loans, is estimated to maintain the growth at 13 per cent in FY25, it said, adding retail growth will slow down to 16 per cent from 17 per cent in FY24.

Retail will remain the fastest-growing segment for banks, but will feel the drag of lower growth in unsecured consumer credit (25 per cent of retail credit) as banks realign their strategies following the regulatory stipulation of ad-

ditional 25 percentage points risk weight and strengthen their underwriting processes to counter a potential rise in delinquencies, the agency said.

The relatively higher yields in unsecured consumer credit and, hence, the ability to absorb the higher capital charge, will limit the decline in retail growth, it added.

On the corporate front, steel, cement and pharmaceuticals will lead the capex recovery, its senior director Ajit Velonie said, adding that emerging sectors such as electronics and semi-conductors, electric vehicles (EVs) and solar modules will also contribute to capex, especially over the medium-term.

Growth in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) segment (16 per cent of overall credit) is estimated to drop to 15 per cent from 19 per cent in FY24, it said.

Agricultural credit growth will remain linked to monsoon trends but should witness a moderation on the back of a strong fiscal 2024, it said.

# TOYOTA SHOWS 'AN ENGINE BORN' WITH GREEN FUEL

THIS COMES AS MANY COMPETITORS IN THE AUTO INDUSTRY ARE PUSHING FOR FULLY ELECTRIC VEHICLES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Tokyo, May 28:** "An engine reborn." That's how Japanese automaker Toyota introduced plans to cast a futuristic spin on the traditional internal combustion engine.

During a three-hour presentation at a Tokyo hall Tuesday, the car manufacturer giant announced it would offer lean compact engines that also run on so-called green fuels like hydrogen and bioethanol, or get paired with zero-emissions electric motors in hybrids.

This comes as many competitors in the auto industry are pushing for fully electric vehicles. China is revving its push for Battery Electric Vehicles, and its own BYD is threatening to outshine Tesla in that push. Toyota's Chief Executive Koji

Sato said the "engine is optimised for the electrification era" with hopes of helping push the world into "carbon neutrality."

Toyota already has a well-known hybrid car — the Prius — with a gas engine and an electric motor. It switches between the two to deliver a cleaner drive.

In future hybrids, the electric motor is set to become the main driving power, and the new engine will be designed to take a lesser role and help it along, according to Toyota.

Domestic allies Subaru Corp. and Mazda Motor Corp., both preparing ecological engines designed to meet the inevitably upcoming stringent emissions standards, joined Toyota's presentation billed as a "multi-pathway workshop."

"Each company wants to win, but we can be faster if we work



together," said Sato. But details on when the engines were coming to market weren't disclosed.

The legacy of the car engine could be felt everywhere.

Mazda said that its prized rotary engine, introduced more than 50 years ago, was being adapted for electric vehicles.

Subaru, meanwhile, showcased its trademark smaller hor-

izontally opposed engine. While Chief Technology Officer Tetsuro Fujimuki confirmed the company was working on a great "Subaru-like" electric vehicle, he said the company wasn't about to dump the engine altogether.

Toyota, too, is working on stylish BEVs. The executives said Tuesday that energy supply conditions differed globally, adding that products had to meet various customer needs and the investments needed for mass-producing BEVs were enormous.

Toyota officials also repeatedly noted that 5.5 million jobs were at stake in the overall supply chain for vehicle production in Japan nowadays, so a sudden shift to electric cars wasn't economically possible or socially responsible.

Takahiro Fujimoto, a profes-

sor of business at Waseda University, believes electric vehicles are a key solution for reducing emissions. But they still have weak points, such as large amounts of emissions produced while making lithium-ion batteries, a chief component.

In Japan, for instance, commuters use trains, so that may be a better ecological choice for transportation, Fujimoto said.

"At the very least, I believe the proliferation of and innovations in BEVs are definitely needed. But that argument is logically not the same as saying that all we need are BEVs," he said.

Uncertainties remain, spanning research and development, as well as social, political and market conditions, said Fujimoto.

"The carbon neutrality the world is aspiring toward isn't likely attainable for decades to come.



# Pant's return spectacular: Ponting

WICKETKEEPER-BATTER HAPPY AT GETTING A SECOND OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY CRICKET AGAIN

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 28: Talismanic wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant has revealed that there were doubts in his mind whether he would again play for the Indian team after his horrific accident December, 2022. Pant returned to competitive cricket once again with IPL-2024 and showed glimpses of his old form, prompting the selectors to include him in the Indian squad for the T20 World Cup.

In IPL-2024, Pant scored 446 runs in 13 matches and was smart and brilliant behind the stumps. The show has prompted former Australian great Ricky Ponting, who is also the head coach of Delhi Capitals, to say that Pant will have a 'huge impact' on India's prospects in the T20 World Cup.

"I was asked when I was over there (India) what I thought about him (Pant). He'd been picked in the Indian squad and I had predicted it. It was great to see him back out there playing again. I've enjoyed every moment of working with him," Ponting was quoted as saying by the 'The ICC Review'. "I am sure he will have a huge impact on this World Cup," Ponting added.

Pant had a strike rate of 155.40 in the recently-concluded IPL for Delhi Capitals. Ponting stated that he never doubted his abilities. He added it was 'spectacular' show from the 26-year-old.

"It's been nothing short of spectacular, to be honest. I spent a few months with him in the



**Now that I am coming back to international cricket, I am more excited than nervous. This is kind of a second life for me**

RISHABH PANT

middle of IPL last year, which were only three or four months after his accident. And I had grave fears then that he would never play the game again. At that stage, he still couldn't walk,"

Ponting stated.

"He (Pant) was on crutches. And I remember saying to him, 'What do you think about next season?' He just looked at me and said, 'Don't worry, I'll be okay'. And he's looked after himself incredibly well. Patrick Farhart has been his physio. He's done a great job with him as well," the three-time ODI World Cup winner added.

Pant meanwhile in a separate programme has revealed that he was reluctant to visit the airport after his life-threatening injury as he was apprehensive

about facing people while wheelchair bound.

"The accident was a life-changing experience for me. When I got up after it, I wasn't even sure if I would be alive, but God was very kind to save me," Pant said on *Dhawan Kareenge*, a talk show hosted by former India cricketer Shikhar Dhawan.

"I couldn't go to the airport because I was nervous about facing people in a wheelchair. I couldn't even brush my teeth for two months, and for six to seven months, I suffered unbearable pain," Pant recalled.

# Shooters level gun-tampering allegations against rifle coach

NRAI refutes charges, says person responsible should be named

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 28: A reputed national coach has been accused of tampering with rifles of some shooters by their parents. However, the charge has been vehemently denied by the National Rifles Association of India (NRAI). It has urged the aggrieved individuals to file complaints.

One of the parents of the allegedly affected shooters, who declined to be named, told this agency Tuesday that he had to purchase a new equipment for his ward after the original rifle was 'spoilt' by the coach. However, the person refused to reveal the coach's identity.

"Yes, my ward's gun was spoilt by the coach. We had to buy a new one because of that. How can the coach just come and do all these setting changes (alter the settings) without the approval of the shooter just one day before a World Cup," the father of the shooter said.

"It happened during the ISSF World Cup in Bhopal last year. Not only this tournament, but also in other events the coach does it. Whenever the coach goes abroad, all these things are done. The logic the coach gave (for changing the settings) was 'you need to experiment'. But experimenting just a day before the World Cup, what experiment are you doing?" he asked.

The father also alleged that a lot of shooters had met NRAI officials and brought it to their notice. "There was a meeting held in NRAI in front of all the



shooters they also told the officials these things. The federation has promised they will look into it. The NRAI knows about it," the father added.

NRAI secretary Rajiv Bhatia refuted the charges. He said he was not aware of any such instance. "I have no idea, nobody has approached us. We have not received anything, any complaints. I don't think so (this has been done)," Bhatia said.

"Even if such a thing has been done, they (shooters) should have the guts to come forward, why these allegations come up once they are not selected? The Bhopal World Cup happened in March last year, so much time has elapsed. If anyone has to say anything, it should be prompt and backed up with facts," Bhatia added.

Another parent of a rifle

shooter however, alleged that the coach had an 'old record' of tampering with guns.

"My ward had gone to play a World Cup and the coach had tampered with the gun in connivance with a jury (member). The coach has an old record of tampering with guns. We have not brought it to the notice of NRAI as we fear retribution from the national body," he alleged.

Meanwhile the NRAI said it has convinced all shooters to compete in the upcoming World Cup in Munich, and affirmed that a mechanism will be worked out to ensure athletes are not deprived of guidance from personal coaches during competitions. "We have assured them that their grievances will be looked into," Bhatia stated.

## SHORT TAKES

### Contrasting day for Indian boxers

**Bangkok:** Nishant Dev out-punched his Mongolian opponent in just over two minutes to progress to the 71kg pre-quarterfinals while Abhinash Jamwal ran out of luck as he was knocked out of the second Boxing World Olympic Qualifiers here Tuesday. Dev against Mongolia's Otgonbaatar Byamba-Erdeneto forced a standing count in the very first minute. A combination of a jab and cross hook led to another standing count and the referee stopped the contest (RSC) with 58 seconds still left to play in Round 1.

### Jr paddlers retain South Asian titles

**New Delhi:** India's under-19 eves' and the U-15 boys' and girls' teams retained their titles at the South Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships which ended Tuesday in Kandy. In the U-19 girls' final the Indian eves defeated Sri Lanka 3-0. Earlier in the semifinals they had beaten Nepal by an identical margin. In the under-15 girls' segment, India outclassed hosts 3-0 again. However, the U-15 final against Sri Lanka was a tough contest. Sarthak Arya won both his singles, to be the architect of India's win. India ultimately won 3-1.

### De Bruyne named Belgium skipper

**Brussels:** Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne will lead a rejuvenated Belgium side including a once-retired Alex Witsel at the European Championships next month. De Bruyne and Witsel were on the 25-man list unveiled by coach Domenico Tedesco here Tuesday. Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, preparing for the Champions League final, however, missed out. De Bruyne and Witsel are remaining members of the so-called golden generation of Belgian players. While De Bruyne's presence was expected, Witsel's was a surprise after Tedesco dropped him from his first squad last year.

### Cornet retires

**Paris:** Alizé Cornet was given a standing ovation and a farewell trophy after playing the final match of her long tennis career, a 2-6, 1-6 loss to No. 7 seed Zheng Qinwen in the first round of the French Open tennis tournament here Tuesday. The 34-year-old Cornet is a Frenchwoman who was given a wild-card entry into the tournament. She had announced ahead of time that this would be her last event before retirement. Cornet thanked her family and French fans, expressing her gratitude for their support over the years.

# CR7 flies high in Saudi Pro League

STRIKER SCORES A RECORD 35 GOALS FOR AL-NASSR AS CLUB FINISH SECOND

AGENCIES

**Riyadh, May 28:** Cristiano Ronaldo finished the Saudi Pro League by setting the season goal-scoring record here Monday. Ronaldo scored twice as Al-Nassr defeated Al-Ittihad 4-2 and lifted his league tally to 35, one more than the record in 2019 by Abderrazak Hamdallah.

In the final seconds of the first half, Ronaldo, who had already had two goals ruled out for offside, chested down a long pass from Mohammed Al-Fatih and opened the scoring with a low shot from the left side of the area.

With 21 minutes remaining, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner celebrated wildly after heading home a corner from Marcelo Brozovic. He was substituted off the field five minutes later to a standing ovation from the home fans. It ended an action-packed season for Ronaldo, who scored four hat tricks and collected one red card. He was also suspended for an obscene gesture in February at Al-Shabab fans who were chanting the name of Lionel Messi, CR7's long-standing soccer rival.

"It would have been better if we had won the league and finished on top," Ronaldo said after the end of the game. "Even though I never play for individual milestones, this (record) means a lot to me. I hope fans re-



member me, because I don't know what the future holds for me," Ronaldo, popularly known as CR7, added.

Al-Nassr finished second in the league, 14 points behind local rivals Al-Hilal, who won the championships more than two weeks ago and completed the 34-round league unbeaten Monday.

Al-Hilal was too strong even without Neymar. Aleksandar Mitrovic ended the season with a goal in the final seconds to clinch a 2-1 win over Al-Wehda. The Serbian striker, signed from London club Fulham last summer, reached 27 league goals,

second only to Ronaldo. On their way to the title, Al-Hilal went on a 34-game winning streak in all competitions, a new world record for a top tier team.

"This season has been truly exceptional for the team, arguably our best ever," coach Jorge Jesus said. "The credit goes to the immense talent within the squad and the incredible sense of unity that transcends both on and off-field interactions."

Ronaldo, however still has one more chance to end the season with a trophy when Al-Nassr meet Al-Hilal in the King's Cup final Friday.

# Facile victory for Praggnanandhaa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Stavanger (Norway) May 28:** Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa got off to a flier and defeated Frouzja Alireza of France in the Armageddon game in the first round of the Norway Chess tournament here Tuesday.

After an easy draw under normal time control, Praggnanandhaa got 10 minutes as white compared to Alireza's seven but with the condition that he had to win as a draw would have given black extra points. The Indian was clinical in his approach and carved out a fine victory in the endgame.

World No.1 Magnus Carlsen played out a 14-move draw in classical and then a 68-move marathon draw with reigning World Champion Ding Liren to seal the day in his favour: while Hikaru Nakamura proved stronger than American compatriot Fabiano Caruana in the Armageddon.

After the end of the first round, Praggnanandhaa, Carlsen and Nakamura share the lead on 1.5 points apiece while Alireza, Liren and Caruana follow them a half point behind.

Praggnanandhaa scored his first ever over-the-board victory over Alireza. It was an irregular queen pawn opening wherein Praggnanandhaa seized a small advantage and benefitted from a casual 26th move by Alireza.

Pouncing on the opportunity, a series of forced moves gave the Indian a decisive advantage and the game was over in 38 moves.

# Shocking defeat for Satwik, Chirag

Bad day for Indian shuttlers at Singapore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Singapore, May 28:** World No. 1 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty crashed out of the Singapore Open after suffering a shock defeat against Denmark's World No. 34 Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard in the opening round of the men's doubles competition here Tuesday. Satwik and Chirag, who had claimed the Thailand Open Super 500 early this month, lost 20-22, 18-21 to Daniel and Mads in a 47-minute clash.

Satwik and Chirag, in ram-paging form with two titles and two runners-up finishes this season, fell behind 6-11 at the break but staged a fine recovery to claw back at 17-17 after some tight rallies.

A precise return on the sides from the Danish duo was cancelled out when they made a judgement error at the backline. Daniel sprayed Satwik's serve into the net, and soon Mads did the same as the Indians grabbed two game points.

Then, Satwik faltered at the net twice to allow the Danish pair to make it 20-20. Chirag dumped his forehead into the net during a flat exchange as Mads and Daniel held one game point, which they converted when Chirag miscued a shot.

After the change of sides, the Danish duo led 6-3 but it was a see saw battle after that.

RESULTS
Satwik & Chirag lost to Daniel & Mads <b>20-22, 18-21</b>
Rutuparna & Swetaparna lost to Chang & Hang <b>12-21, 21-12, 13-21</b>
Priyanshu Rajawat lost to Lee Cheuk <b>21-23, 19-21</b>

A cross-court shot secured a 17-16 lead for the Indians but Chirag served into the net. Satwik then found the net and also went long and when Chirag pushed one wide, it was three match points for the Danes, who converted on the second chance.

It turned out to be a dismal day for India as Aakarsh Kashyap and Priyanshu Rajawat also failed to cross the opening hurdle in singles competition.

While World No. 41 Kashyap lost 7-21, 15-21 to Thailand's Pornpicha Choeikewong, his compatriot Rajawat fought hard before going down 21-23, 19-21 to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu.

The women's doubles pair of Rutuparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda also played their hearts out before losing 12-21, 21-12, 13-21 to Chinese Taipei's Chang Ching Hui and Yang Ching Tun.

# Mates want to win game for Chhetri

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 28:** Central midfielder Anirudh Thapa knows that a win for India in their upcoming FIFA World Cup qualifier against Kuwait will be massive for the country's football landscape and he is confident of putting the best foot forward.

The game, at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, will also mark the legendary Sunil Chhetri's farewell from international football after a glorious 19-year career.

"It is an important match for all of us, and especially for Sunil bhai. We need to make sure that we qualify for the third round because that would be huge for Indian football and the fans," Thapa was quoted by saying on

the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) website.

"We have to win the game for Sunil bhai and ensure that we get three points. He used to guide us through everything, tell us new things like how to stay fit, and what to do in your daily life. He has been a mentor for all," added Thapa.

On the pitch, Thapa and Chhetri's chemistry is no secret. Four of Chhetri's 94 international goals have come from passes by Thapa.

The midfielder also said that they talked about things other than football. "Yeah, we do talk outside football. We discuss our holidays and vacations. In the national camp too, after our meals in the dining room, we sit and chat for a while," Thapa said.

# 'Modi', 'Shah' among aspirants for India coach job

BCCI READY TO WAIT AS DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS ENDS

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 28:** The deadline for submitting applications for Team India's head coach ended Monday. Sources in the BCCI stated here Tuesday that it has received more than 3,000 applications for the post. Among those who have applied are a 'Narendra Modi, 'Amit Shah', 'Sachin Tendulkar' and even current coach 'Rahul Dravid'.

BCCI sources said that this has happened as it had made the application process public so that people could apply through a particular website. In the process, thousands have applied with fake names and accounts, using the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union



Home Minister Amit Shah and the iconic Sachin Tendulkar, sources said.

Names of other celebrities like Akshay Kumar, Shah Rukh Khan and others have also been used. Other than Tendulkar, the names of cricketers that have been used are Harbhajan Singh, Virender Sehwag and MS Dhoni.

BCCI officials however, have rejected all these applications forthwith.

"Last year too, the BCCI received such a response where imposters applied and the story is similar this time. The reason the BCCI had to invite applications on Google forms is it's easy to scrutinise the names of applicants

in one sheet," a BCCI official stated here Tuesday. "We cannot do anything about it," he added.

According to the advertisement issued by the BCCI, the applicant "must be willing to meet work expectations and pressures associated with handling marquee athletes"; and they should help in 'developing a world-class Indian cricket team that deliver sustained success in all conditions and formats, inspiring current and future generations of cricketers and stakeholders with their approach to the game'.

Team India's current head coach Rahul Dravid's stint will come to an end after the conclusion of the T20 World Cup. Dravid has already said that he does not want the job for a third term.

Meanwhile KKR mentor Gautam Gambhir is reportedly leading the race to be appointed as head coach of the Indian cricket team, sources stated.