



Mrunal's bucket list

Actor Mrunal Thakur, in a candid chat with a lifestyle magazine, opens up about her personal and professional aspirations

LEISURE | P2



IMF gives \$1.02bn to Pak

The International Monetary Fund disburses a second tranche of \$1.023bn under the Extended Fund Facility programme for Pakistan

INTERNATIONAL | P10



WPI inflation dips

Wholesale price inflation drops to a 13-month low of 0.85% in April with softening in prices of food articles, fuel and manufactured products

BUSINESS | P11



IPL revises rules

IPL allows teams to make temporary replacements in their squad for the remainder of the tournament as a few foreign players are unavailable

SPORTS | P12

Justice BR Gavai takes oath as CJ

New Delhi: Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, who has been part of several benches that delivered landmark rulings including the one upholding the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 bestowing special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was Wednesday sworn in as the 52nd Chief Justice of India. The 64-year-old was administered oath by President Droupadi Murmu at a brief ceremony at the Ganatantra Mandap in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He succeeds Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who demitted office Tuesday on attaining the age of 65. **P8**

'BHARGAVASTRA' TEST SUCCESSFUL

New Delhi: India achieved a significant milestone in its counter-drone capabilities with the successful test firing of its low-cost, hard-kill counter-swarm drone system, 'Bhargavastra', at the Seaward Firing Range in Gopalpur Wednesday. The system met all specified performance targets and is being hailed as a major advancement in the country's ability to neutralise the emerging threat of drone swarms. Developed indigenously by Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited, 'Bhargavastra' is a powerful addition to India's defence arsenal, particularly in its mission to secure airspace from unmanned aerial threats. **P3**

CHINA AT IT AGAIN

New Delhi: India Wednesday outrightly rejected China's attempts to rename some places in Arunachal Pradesh, saying such "preposterous" attempts will not alter the "undeniable" reality that the state "was, is, and will" always remain an integral part of India. New Delhi's reaction came in response to Beijing announcing Chinese names for some places in Arunachal Pradesh, which the neighbouring country claims as the southern part of Tibet. "We have noticed that China has persisted with its vain and preposterous attempts to name places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. **P8**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Dad took it all, painted his face, and went campaigning



HONOURING BRAVEHEARTS: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Deputy CMs KV Singh Deo and Pravati Parida, Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari, Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling and BJP state president Manmohan Samal during the 'Triranga Yatra' in honour of Indian armed forces in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. (Report P3)

11.25% seats for SEBC category in higher edu

Though the SEBC candidates were earlier getting reservation in jobs, there was no such provision in education

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 14: The state government Wednesday decided to reserve 11.25 per cent of seats for the students belonging to the Socially and Economically Backward Class (SEBC), taking the total ratio of quota in education to 50 per cent in the state.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. "Our government, within 11 months of its tenure, has given justice to the students belonging to the SEBC category," Majhi said.

Though the SEBC candidates were earlier getting reservation in jobs (11.25 per cent), there was no provision in education for which the opposition BJD and Congress were making demands both inside the Assembly and outside.



Briefing reporters, the Chief Minister said that it is a landmark decision of the government to introduce an 11.25 per cent reservation in admission for students belonging to SEBC in universities, state government and aided higher secondary and higher education institutions from the academic year 2025-26.

Majhi said the initiative ensures uniform implementation of reservation in admission for students belonging to ST (22.5 per cent), SC (16.25 per cent), SEBC (11.25 per cent), persons with disability (five per cent) and ex-servicemen (one per

cent) in institutions under the state government.

These include institutions under the School & Mass Education department (for Higher Secondary Schools, Teacher Training, and Vocational Courses), the Higher Education department (Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Teacher Education, LL.B., and Integrated Law Courses), the Odia Language, Literature & Culture department (Bachelor in Performing Arts Courses), and the Sports & Youth Services Department (B.P.Ed. and M.P.Ed. courses).

The decision is taken in line with NEP 2020, the Chief Minister said, adding that the move aims to promote access, equity, and inclusion, increase the gross enrolment ratio, and enhance opportunities for marginalised and disadvantaged communities in Odisha. **More P3**

OPERATION BLACK FOREST

31 Maoists killed in 21-day action: Forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bijapur, May 14: Security forces Wednesday declared a major success saying they have demolished the "invincibility" of the Maoists and killed 31 ultras in and around a treacherous hill along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border in the biggest ever coordinated operation carried out by them to eliminate the menace by next March.

Chiefs of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Chhattisgarh Police, GP Singh and AD Singh respectively, along with senior commanders of the two forces addressed the media in this district, about 450 km from state capital Raipur, to assert that the top armed Naxal leadership was "either eliminated or injured".

A total of 21 encounters took place during this operation, according to official data.

Bijapur is one among the six most Naxal violence-affected districts of the country.

The two chiefs said the 21-day long operation codenamed 'Black forest' that began April 21 at the Korgotalu Hills (KGH) along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border ended after 21 days May 11 leading to killing of 31 Maoists including 16 women, seizure of 450 IEDs, about two tonnes of explosives, a number of rifles and ammunition.

Eighteen security forces personnel were injured in this operation.

As many as 214 bunkers were busted and 818 barrel grenade launchers recovered.

CRPF director general (DG) Gyanendra Pratap Singh said the operation "achieved more than what was targeted" and the force is sure that they will meet the Union government's deadline of ending Left wing extremism (LWE) from the country by March 2026.

We are undertaking a "ruthless and relentless" strategy and this coordinated operation between CRPF, its jungle warfare commando unit CoBRA and Chhattisgarh Police's STF and DRG played its "best" role and will continue in the future, he said. The CRPF DG said the forces were still sanitising the KGH for "residual" IEDs so that the hills can be opened for civilians.

"We have demolished their fort (under operation Black Forest) and we have demolished their invincibility during the operation at the KGH," Chhattisgarh DGP AD Gautam said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday termed the operation as a historic breakthrough by security forces in the resolve to make the country Naxal free.

Shah also said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is determined to root out Naxalism. "I once again assure the countrymen that India is sure to be Naxal-free by March 31, 2026," he wrote on 'X' in Hindi.

MP MIN IN SOUP OVER REMARKS ON COL SOFIA QURESHI

Language of gutters: HC orders FIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jabalpur, May 14: The Madhya Pradesh High Court Wednesday castigated state minister Vijay Shah for passing scurrilous remarks and using "language of the gutters" against Colonel Sofia Qureshi, and ordered the police to file an FIR against him on the charge of promoting enmity and hatred.

It also said the armed forces were perhaps the last institution in this country that reflect integrity, discipline, sacrifice, selflessness, character, honour

and indomitable courage.

Colonel Qureshi came into the spotlight for holding regular press briefings along with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh about 'Operation Sindoor' conducted last week by Indian armed forces to strike terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Shah, the tribal affairs minister and BJP leader, sparked a major controversy with objectionable comments against Colonel Qureshi, whom he tried

to project as a sister of terrorists. He made the remarks while addressing a gathering in Ramkunda village near Indore Monday.

Taking suo motu cognisance of the controversial statements, the high court's division bench of Justices Atul Shridharan and Anuradha Shukla ordered the police to register a first information report (FIR) against the minister.

The court directed the police department to register the FIR by 6pm Wednesday, and also directed it to inform about it.

5 killed in lightning strikes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, May 14: Five persons, including three of a family, were killed in separate incidents of lightning strike in Koraput and Rayagada districts Wednesday.

In the first incident, a man, his daughter and the former's aunt were killed at Kandhaputabandh village under Ampabali panchayat and this block in

Koraput district. The deceased man's wife had a close shave.

In a separate incident, a woman of Garlidabad village of Nuagaon panchayat in Koraput district died after lightning struck her while she was grazing cattle near Uparpaniki village. Similarly, a minor boy at Antameda village under Kolnara block in Rayagada district was killed after lightning struck him near a mango orchard.

Pak hands over BSF jawan after 21 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amritsar, May 14: India and Pakistan Wednesday handed each other's border-guarding personnel captured by the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Pakistan Rangers respectively at the International Borders (IB) between the two countries, officials said.

BSF jawan Purnam Kumar Shaw was handed over to India, 21 days after he was apprehended by the Rangers from along the International Border in Punjab. Shaw was apprehended by the Pakistan Rangers a day after the Pahalgam terrorist attack in which 26 people were killed. The officials said a Pakistani Ranger apprehended by the BSF from the Rajasthan border May 3 was also handed back to the neighbouring country.

Constable Shaw was handed over to the BSF by the Pakistan Rangers at 10.30am at the joint check post (JCP) Attari in Amritsar district opposite Pakistan's Wagah, a BSF spokesperson said.

Maori MPs face ban from NZ Parl for viral 'haka' protest

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wellington, May 14: Three New Zealand lawmakers from Te Pati Maori, the Maori Party, will receive temporary bans from Parliament and severe censure, it was announced Wednesday, over their protest of a proposed law by performing a haka, a chanting dance of challenge, directed at their opponents.

A committee of their peers recommended the penalties, understood to be the harshest ever assigned to New Zealand parliamentarians, in findings

that said the trio's actions could have intimidated other legislators and were in contempt of Parliament. Their temporary suspensions are expected to be affirmed by vote during a sitting of all lawmakers Thursday.

The decision means that Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, who at 22 is currently New Zealand's youngest lawmaker, will be suspended from Parliament for seven days. The co-leaders of her political party, Rawiri Waititi and Debbie Ngarewa-Packer, face 21-day bans.

They won't receive salaries during their suspensions.

The ruling is the latest twist in a fraught national saga over a bill, now defeated, that opponents said would reverse decades of progress for Maori, New Zealand's Indigenous people, and provoke constitutional havoc.

Video of the legislators in full cry drew millions of views on social media and global news headlines last November. The bill they opposed was vanquished at a second vote in April.

However, some lawmakers from the centre-right government objected to the Maori Party legislators' protest during the first vote and complained to Par-



liament's speaker. At issue was the way the trio walked across the floor of the debating chamber towards their opponents

while they performed the haka. "It is not acceptable to physically approach another member on the floor of the debating

chamber," Wednesday's report said, adding that the behaviour could be considered intimidating. The committee denied the legislators were being punished for the haka - which is a beloved and sacred cultural institution in New Zealand life, but "the time and manner in which it was performed" during a vote, according to the findings.

The committee deciding the fate of the lawmakers is comprised of members from all political parties. The government's opponents disagreed with parts or all of the decision but were overruled.

leisure



HALLE BAILEY ACCUSES EX DARRYL DWAYNE GRANBERRY OF ABUSE

Hollywood actress Halle Bailey has levelled accusations against her ex-boyfriend and father of her child, DDG, of abuse, and was granted a temporary restraining order against him. The former couple's son, Halo Saint Granberry, born in December 2023, is also protected from DDG under the temporary restraining order.

PORTMAN REVEALS WHY SHE PREFERS LIVING IN PARIS

Hollywood star Natalie Portman has explained why she prefers living in Paris than in Los Angeles. "I find the people in Paris are actually incredibly friendly – you just have to know how to interact, so that we're not the ones being rude," said the 43 year old.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You feel positive about imbuing the ideas of spirituality today. This will make you open to the idea of accepting the responsibility for old mistakes, and it includes your relations with people in your neighbourhood. This will pave the way for your success in the future, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
You are not likely to take anything lying down today, says Ganesha. If you find anyone plotting and planning against you, you will not be too polite in dealing with them. Violent outbursts could make you lose the grace and dignity you are known for. You could end up regretting your actions and having second thought about your beliefs and principles.

GEMINI
You will need to curb your tendency to pay attention to the professional demands and needs of other people over your own. Your work-load today will demand creative solutions and will require some amount of brain-storming with your colleagues. People of the opposite sex will play an important role in your life today, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will feel self-satisfaction. Your simplicity will impress people. You may visit a religious spot to set up rapport with God. A beautiful and inspiring day, says Ganesha.

LEO
You will not shy away from hard work to attain success in personal and professional endeavours. Your attitude will come in for praise from your superiors and you will be rewarded as well. Your responsibilities in the office will increase, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Your thinking will be very sharp today, and at the same time you will feel passionate about work. In the afternoon, you can afford to unwind a bit. Those in the public sector will feel inspired and have an agreeable day. Your no-nonsense attitude will be very apparent, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that you will be able to meet with people sharing the same ideas and views as you do and this will enhance your knowledge too. You will have to shoulder new responsibilities. Those of you who are in the field of business may gain good benefits today. Ganesha says that you should take care of your health, which may deteriorate due to excessive work load at the office.

SCORPIO
Ganesha advises you to practice caution today. There may be a lot of people who may be green with envy as you are better than them in every way. Words of wisdom by you may not only change their opinion about you, but also win you accolades in social circles.

SAGITTARIUS
Celebrations galore, foresees Ganesha. Two different individuals may have different opinions, but that should not result into ugly arguments. Watch out for any mishap, warns Ganesha. Your near and dear ones become a priority in the evening. Also, you will look forward to a candle-lit dinner with your sweetheart in the evening.

CAPRICORN
Never judge a book by its cover. Same applies to human beings, also. And, you are one of them. At first, you may not be able to impress the other person with your looks, but once you display your communication power, you win him over, feels Ganesha.

AQUARIUS
You will bring excellence to the table. But, the results may not reflect the same. The day progresses on slow pace and no major events are in store for you, says Ganesha. On the personal front, you may have some problems with your spouse, but you will learn to ignore them, sit back and unwind.

PISCES
Today is a day filled with entertainment and leisure. However, you could be prone to savagemooswingstodaywithoutanyreason. Hence those around you will need to be on their toes. You might end up neglecting your work in your pursuit of pleasure, says Ganesha.

Wamiqa glad she made 'mistake'

New Delhi: Wamiqa Gabbi, who will next be seen in the film *Bhool Chuk Maaf*, has talked about that one "mistake" she made and is thankful for. The actress said it was learning to say "no".

Asked if there is a 'Bhool Chuk' that she made and is thankful for, Wamiqa told this agency: "It's saying no."

The 31-year-old actress is now glad that she's getting comfortable with saying no, when needed.

"At that time it feels like such a mistake. Saying no at times feels like such a... It feels like I hope I am not doing something wrong by saying no. But that is something that I'm so glad that getting comfortable with saying no is such a nice thing."

The film is produced by Dinesh Vijan under the Maddock Films banner, with music by Tanishk Bagchi, lyrics by Irshad Kamil, and vocals by Tanishk Bagchi and Madhubanti Bagchi.

Talking about *Bhool Chuk Maaf*, directed by Karan Sharma, the film revolves around Ranjan, a small-town romantic boy from Banaras, who lands a government job to marry Titli but forgets his vow to Lord Shiva-only to be trapped until he fulfills his promise. A hilarious tale of love, fate, and redemption unfolds.

AGENCIES

MRUNAL'S BUCKET LIST

Mumbai: Actress Mrunal Thakur recently opened up about her personal and professional aspirations in a candid chat with Cosmo India. While reflecting on a goal she recently checked off — sending her brother to study filmmaking in the U.S. — Mrunal gave a peek into what's next on her evolving bucket list.

Mrunal Thakur reveals she wants to work in Malayalam, Tamil, English, and Spanish films: "One step at a time"

"Currently, I am focusing on my bucket list, which includes sending my brother to America to study filmmaking at a place I would have liked to go," she said, noting how fulfilling it was to live that dream vicariously through him.

Looking ahead, Mrunal's ambitions reflect both a desire for personal growth and a deep commitment to her craft. "I want to travel with my family to America,

London, and Europe — basically, take them everywhere," she shared, adding that one of her broader goals is "to change the definition of how Indian women are perceived" and to embrace motherhood along the way. "I think I'll be a good mom. I just don't know with whom, so that is something that I'm working on," she said, candidly.

Coming to the work front, the 32-year-old actress is currently busy shooting *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai*, co-starring Varun Dhawan and Pooja Hegde.

AGENCIES



Daman directors return with Landfall



Bhubaneswar: Acclaimed director duo Debi Prasad Lenka and Vishal Mourya, known for their National Award-winning Odia film *Daman*, are set to return with a high-budget cinematic venture titled *Landfall*. The title and poster were unveiled at a special event here Tuesday, generating buzz across the industry.

Starring leading actor Sabyasachi Mishra and actress Dibyasnata, *Landfall* is being presented by Pixel Movies and produced by Prabhat Kumar Pradhan.

Inspired by the recurring natural disasters in Odisha, the film promises a gripping narrative rooted in emotional and environmental realities.

Following the success of *Daman*, Lenka and Mourya spent the last three years in extensive pre-production for *Landfall*. The movie is expect-

ed to be the most expensive in the history of the Odia film industry, with a projected budget of Rs 10 crore. A large-scale set will be constructed, with the filmmakers emphasizing the use of advanced animation and visual effects to bring the storm-ravaged landscapes to life.

Producer Prabhat Kumar Pradhan expressed confidence that *Landfall* will redefine Odia cinema's visual storytelling, much like *Baahubali* did for South Indian cinema. The film will be released in both Odia and Hindi, aiming for a broader national appeal.

Sabyasachi shared his enthusiasm for the collaboration, noting the film's deep emotional resonance with Odia audiences who have lived through the trauma of cyclones. "Every Odia has some bitter or emotional memory connected with storms," he said.

SRK tops Power Rankings at Met Gala beating Zendaya, Rihanna

The recently held Met Gala saw the attendance of some of the top movie stars, pop icons, fashionistas, and even sports stars. The red carpet (blue for this event) was a superstar-studded affair. Earlier this week, the official Power Rankings of the gala were announced, deciphering which star walked away with the most impact on social media. And while many top names were in the fray, a 59-year-old whom hardly anyone recognised on the blue carpet walked away with the plaudits.

On Tuesday, *The Hollywood Reporter* revealed Launchmetrics' findings of which brands and stars earned the most media ex-



posure (in millions) at the 2025 Met Gala. The Met Gala red car-



pet power rankings show which stars and brands generated the

most amount of buzz online and earned the highest revenue. The 2025 rankings put Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan at the top of the men's rankings with \$19 million Media Impact Value (MIV). This implies that his red carpet appearance at the gala earned him \$19 million through just social media. In the overall list, Shah Rukh was in the third spot, behind only K-pop star Lisa (\$21.3 million in MIV) and Thai actor Sarocha Chankimha aka Aree (\$19.5 million).

Khan was ahead of some of the biggest global superstars, including Zendaya (\$14.3 million) and Rihanna (\$13.5 million).



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

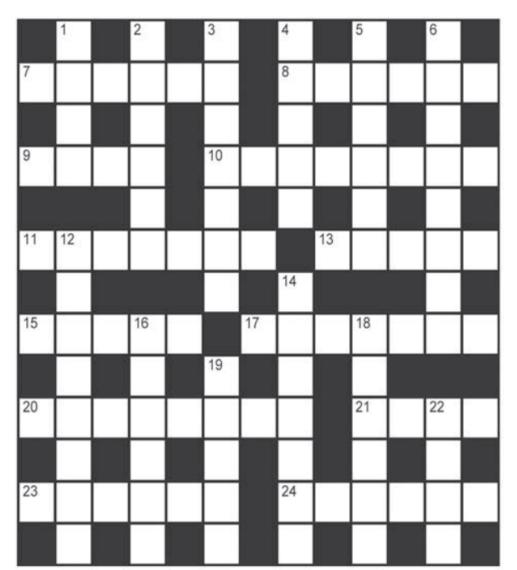


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Billiard table part
 - 8 Movie, part 2
 - 9 Scratch
 - 10 Kind of tree or wine
 - 11 Honours
 - 13 Detonation
 - 15 Joint type
 - 17 Desert sight
 - 20 Underground tunnel
 - 21 Diplomacy
 - 23 Grief
 - 24 Stomach woes
 - 4 Sacred hymn
 - 5 Talk like a pig
 - 6 Mid-west US state
 - 12 Walt Disney was one
 - 14 Seaport
- Down
- 1 Grouse or turkey
 - 2 Spit
 - 3 Make an error
 - 16 Sanity
 - 18 Capers
 - 19 Repentant word
 - 22 Freshwater fish

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.

			7	4		9		
			8		7	3		
9	1		2					
			3			4		
					6	8		
		1	5			9	7	
				2	1			
4			6					8

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

S	A	G	A	C	I	T	Y	B	E	A
O	A	H	U	L	L	A				
F	I	L	B	E	R	T	S	G	E	M
T	A	W	U	F	V	S				
A	A	H	A	E	T	C				
S	E	N	S	E	O	F	H	U	M	O
S	T	F	T	R	R	E				
A	R	E	N	A	S	I	D	S		
I	A	T	V	E	A	D				
L	U	T	E	J	E	A	L	O	U	S
E	E	G	I	T	E					
D	A	R	T	M	A	N	S	I	O	N

SUDOKU

4	8	6	3	9	5	1	2	7
2	7	5	6	1	4	3	9	8
9	1	3	2	8	7	5	6	4
5	2	1	4	7	9	6	8	3
8	9	7	5	3	6	4	1	2
3	6	4	1	2	8	9	7	5
1	5	9	8	4	2	7	3	6
7	4	2	9	6	3	8	5	1
6	3	8	7	5	1	2	4	9

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

CM flags off 'Tiranga Yatra'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday flagged off 'Tiranga Yatra' or 'Parakram Sobha Yatra' here in honour of the Indian armed forces for exhibiting unique valour during Operation Sindoor.

The rally was organised to boost the morale of the Indian armed forces for their success in Operation Sindoor, which was launched in response to the Pahalgam terror attack.

India launched Operation Sindoor targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir May 7, two weeks after the horrific massacre of 26 civilians.

The motorbike rally started from Kalinga Stadium and went up to Raj Bhavan here before passing through different parts of the City.

After flagging off the 'Tiranga Yatra', Majhi himself participated in the bike rally. Wearing a helmet, the CM rode pillion on a motorbike, which was driven by Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj. Majhi, however, covered a small distance as the rally passed through Jayadev Vihar, Acharya Vihar, Vani Vihar, Raj Mahal Square and AG Square before reaching the Governor's House Square.

Some jawans of the Central Armed Police Force also joined the bike rally. Holding tricolours, the participants raised slogans like 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Indian armed forces zindabad' amid singing of patriotic songs.

"In the wake of the Indian armed forces' success in Operation Sindoor, we salute the jawans and honour the Tiranga. No one can give us a nuclear threat. We will march with our commitments," Majhi told reporters.

Apart from Majhi, Deputy Chief Ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravati Parida, ministers including Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari and Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling and senior officials were also present on the occasion.

State government officials from different departments also joined the rally, flagged off from Gate 3 of the Kalinga Stadium. Odisha BJP leaders, including its state unit president Manmohan Samal, also joined the 'Tiranga Yatra' here.

"We are indebted to the Indian armed forces. The people are working peacefully in India because our jawans are keeping a constant vigil at the borders. They have taught a lesson to the terrorists and Pakistan," said Pujari.

Cabinet okays merger of Mamata, PMMVY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: The state Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, approved six proposals, including merger of the state-sponsored Mamata Yojana with the Centre's Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Wednesday.

Following the merger, the new initiative will be named Mamata-PMMVY, Majhi said.

"Earlier, beneficiaries used to get ₹10,000 for the birth of a girl child under Mamata Yojana. Now, they will get ₹12,000 under Mamata-PMMVY," the chief minister said, adding that beneficiaries will receive ₹10,000 for the birth of a boy child under the merged scheme.

Women from PVTG community will be given ₹12,000 for the birth of a girl child and ₹10,000 for the birth of a boy for all live births, he stated. Anganwadi workers and Anganwadi helpers, who used to get ₹200 and ₹100 respectively as incentive earlier, will now receive ₹250 and ₹150, Majhi said.

In the next five years, the expenditure on Mamata-PMMVY would be about ₹2,670 crore, he said.

The state has also decided to construct a barrage in Mayurbhanj district at a cost of ₹97.67 crore. The work is planned to be completed in 30 months, the CM said.

"The barrage would be built across the river Khairibhandan near Analabeni village in Jashipur block to provide assured Kharif irrigation in the drought-



prone region, inhabited mostly by backward, weaker and tribal population," he added.

The state Cabinet approved amendment of combined recruitment examination of different posts having Physical Measurement and Physical Efficiency Test Rules, 2022.

The proposal of Revenue and Disaster Management department to lease out 40 acre and 197 decimal government land in Suleikhamar Mouza in Keonjhar district in favour of Dharanidhar University in the district free of all charges for establishment of its north and south campus also got the Cabinet approval.

The state Cabinet gave its nod to amendment of Odisha Government ITIs Trainers' Service (Methods of Recruitment and Conditions of Service) Rules, 2024.

Moreover, the Odisha government decided to reserve 11.25 per cent of seats for the students belonging to the Socially and Economically Backward Class (SEBC), taking the total ratio of quota in education to 50 per cent in the state.

While Union Education Minister Dharmendra Prad-

han hailed the 11.25 per cent reservation decision as an empowering step, the Opposition BJD and Congress demanded at least 27 per cent reservation for the SEBC or OBC students in the education sector, including the medical and engineering courses.

"This move will enhance the value of education among backward communities and contribute to building a developed Odisha and a stronger India," Pradhan said.

Senior BJD leader Arun Sahoo said, "The state government has not provided the reservation for the OBC students in medical and engineering courses. We demand the government to implement it immediately."

If the reservation system is implemented in the medical and engineering courses, then only the SC, ST and OBC students can benefit, Sahoo said.

"At least 27 per cent reservation should be provided to the OBC students. After bringing an amendment to prevailing law, the reservation should be enhanced to 54 per cent. The SC and ST should also get the reservation as per their population," the BJD leader demanded.

State Congress president Bhakta Charan Das also said that the government should reconsider the decision otherwise it would face protests across Odisha. "The government needs to provide 27 per cent reservation to the OBC students. The government has not made any change in the admission into medical and technical education courses," Das said.

India successfully tests 'Bhargavastra'



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 14: India achieved a significant milestone in its counter-drone capabilities with the successful test firing of its low-cost, hard-kill counter-swarm drone system, 'Bhargavastra', at the Seaward Firing Range in Gopalpur Wednesday.

The system met all specified performance targets and is being hailed as a major advancement in the country's ability to neutralise the emerging threat of drone swarms.

Developed indigenously by Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited (SDAL), 'Bhargavastra' is a powerful addition to India's defence arsenal, particularly in its mission to secure airspace from unmanned aerial threats.

The micro rockets that form the heart of the system underwent rigorous testing in Gopalpur and successfully achieved all designated objectives, indicating a high level of operational readiness. Three separate trials of the rocket system were carried out May 13 in the presence of senior officials from the Army Air Defence (AAD).

Two of these tests involved the firing of individual rockets, while the third was conducted in salvo mode, launching two rockets within a span of just two seconds. All four rockets met the required launch parameters, highlighting the system's robust technological foundation and its potential to combat large-scale drone incursions effectively.

According to SDAL, 'Bhargavastra' offers a unified and advanced solution to counter the

growing threat from Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), especially drone swarms.

The system has the capability to detect and neutralise small, fast-moving drones at distances of up to 2.5 km. It utilises unguided micro rockets as its primary defensive layer, designed to destroy multiple drones within a lethal radius of 20 metres.

For precision strikes, a guided micro-missile - which has already undergone successful testing - forms the second defensive tier, ensuring pinpoint accuracy. The system is engineered to function efficiently across varied terrains, including high-altitude areas exceeding 5,000 metres above sea level.

This design feature addresses the complex operational challenges faced by India's armed forces in difficult and strategic regions. SDAL has highlighted the indigenous nature of the technology, emphasising the in-house development of both the dedicated rockets and micro-missiles.

'Bhargavastra' is also designed with modularity in mind, allowing for the integration of a soft-kill layer that can include jamming and spoofing elements, thereby offering a comprehensive and multi-dimensional shield against UAV threats.

A key feature of 'Bhargavastra' is its seamless compatibility with India's existing network-centric warfare systems.

The counter-drone system includes a Command-and-Control Centre that integrates advanced C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) technologies.

New EV policy in state soon: Singh Deo

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: As part of a broader push towards green and renewable energy, the state government is gearing up to launch a comprehensive Electric Vehicle (EV) policy, aimed at strengthening the infrastructure required for EV adoption, Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo said here Wednesday.

Speaking at a meeting with Sarvotech, a company specialising in solar energy and EV infrastructure, at Lok Seva Bhavan in the City, Singh Deo emphasised the importance of building a clean and sustainable future for a 'Viksit Odisha'.



He highlighted that the proposed EV policy will lay the foundation for the construction of EV charging stations across the state, aligning with the national mission to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and curb carbon emissions.

On the occasion, Sarvotech representatives presented their proposal for setting up of EV charging stations and expanding solar power generation across the state. The firm has already conducted field

visits and expressed interest in contributing to the state's EV infrastructure.

"The state is committed to increasing the use of electric vehicles. For this, we are soon bringing the 'Odisha EV Policy', which will create the right ecosystem for EV growth - including charging infrastructure, subsidies, and private sector participation," Singh Deo said.

Odisha's power sector has already received national recognition, with three of its DISCOMs ranked among the top 10 in the country. The state's efficient electricity management has also drawn interest from Uttar Pradesh, which is exploring the model for replication.

Key officials in attendance included, Finance department Principal Secretary Saswat Kumar Mishra, GRIDCO Managing Director Trilochana Panda, Sarvotech MD Raman Bhatia, senior executives from Tata Power and officials from the Energy department.

The upcoming Odisha EV Policy is expected to catalyse investments, promote sustainable transport, and reduce the carbon footprint of the state's transportation sector.

Prepare database of street hawkers, BJD tells Puri SP

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 14: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday urged the police to prepare a database of street hawkers and regulate them in the wake of the incident of rape of a girl in Pipli area of Puri district involving a West Bengal-based hawker.

The regional party, in a memorandum to Puri Superintendent of Police (SP) Vinit Agrawal, appreciated the swift police action that led to arrest of the accused in the rape incident.

"There should be a meticulous and transparent investigation into the case, ensuring that all evidence is collected and analysed with utmost diligence and that the perpetrator is prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," the memorandum said.

A street hawker, resident of neighbouring West Bengal, allegedly raped a girl in Pipli May 11.

"We call for the implementation of a strict regulatory framework for all street hawkers operating within Puri district, with a particular focus on those originating from outside Odisha," the BJD said in the memorandum. The framework should include mandatory registration and verification procedures, the regional party said in the memorandum. The police should create a comprehensive database containing the identities, addresses, and relevant information of all street hawkers, it said.

Asit Mohapatra new ORERA chairperson

Bhubaneswar: The state government Wednesday appointed Asit Kumar Mohapatra as the chairperson of Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA). "In exercise of the powers conferred under Sub-section 1 of Section 20 of the Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Act, 2016 and Rule 18 (7) of the Odisha Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Rules, 2017, the State Government is pleased to appoint Sri Asit Kumar Mohapatra as Chairperson in Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) with effect from the date he assumes the office," said a notification issued by the Housing and Urban Development department. This apart, the state government also appointed Rajendra Mishra and Shyam Sundar Dash as members of ORERA.



KEEPING FRESH: A roadside vendor sprinkles water on lychee amid sweltering heat, in Cuttack, Wednesday

NHRC seeks ATR from Odisha, Jharkhand on tribal issues

AGENCIES

Kendrapara/Bhubaneswar, May 14: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought an action-taken report (ATR) from the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and Jharkhand regarding issues of displacement, tribal land alienation, deforestation, and the overall impact on tribal populations caused by prolonged inaction and negligence by state authorities.

While hearing a plea filed by human rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the commission Tuesday directed the authorities to submit the ATR within 15 days.

In his petition, Tripathy highlighted the severe and long-standing impact of tribal land alienation in both states, affecting more than one lakh tribal individuals.

He brought attention to systemic exploitation

through manipulation of land records, widespread deforestation, and mass displacement resulting from development projects. These factors, he argued, have deprived tribal communities of their primary livelihoods, cultural identity, and legal land rights.

Tripathy urged the commission to intervene by investigating the root causes of land alienation, enforcing protective policies, and en-

suring meaningful rehabilitation for the affected communities.

In its observations, the NHRC stated, "The commission is of the considered view that the allegations levelled in the complaint constitute serious violations of the human rights of the victims."

The petitioner also called upon the NHRC to conduct a comprehensive survey and research, and to provide recommendations to the gov-

ernment on the critical issues faced by internally displaced persons due to internal conflicts, wildlife sanctuaries, and protected areas.

Furthermore, Tripathy urged the commission to advocate for the enactment of a national law addressing displacement and tribal land alienation, covering all categories of displacements, and ensuring the implementation of tribal welfare policies across India.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Nursing students of SCB Medical College and Hospital perform during the closing ceremony of an event organised to mark International Nurses Day on the institution premises in Cuttack, Wednesday



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Minister Samanta calls for global handloom exposure



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: Handloom, Textiles and Handicrafts Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta underlined the importance of handloom and handicrafts as key cultural symbols of the state, urging the need for enhanced marketing strategies and global exposure.

During the inauguration of a two-day workshop and review meeting for field officers of Handloom, Textiles, and Handicrafts department here Wednesday, the Minister emphasised leveraging online platforms to promote local products internationally.

Samanta noted that Odisha's traditional crafts have significant cultural value, but it is essential to strengthen the marketing mechanisms to make these products globally accessible.

He called for a concerted effort to increase the global presence of the state's handicrafts while also improving the welfare of local artisans, weavers, and silk farmers.

The Minister emphasised the importance of inclusive planning that would prioritise the welfare of artisans and provide employment opportunities, especially for women and youth. He pointed out that investments in the apparel and textile industries could play a crucial role in creating job avenues, leading to economic growth in rural areas.

The meeting, which was attended by senior officials and field officers, also reviewed the progress and effectiveness of various departmental schemes. The focus was particularly on boosting silk production in the state, which includes Muga, Tussar, Eri, and Mulberry silks. Encouraging entrepreneurship, especially among unemployed youth, was another key focus area.

In her address, Commissioner-cum-Secretary Guha Poonam Tapas Kumar stressed the need for innovation in design, modern packaging techniques, and the development of new market linkages and clusters to promote Odisha's handloom and handicrafts. Director of Textiles Prem Chandra Chaudhary called for regular training programmes and the provision of incentives to upskill weavers and artisans.

Several key achievements for the 2024-25 fiscal year were outlined during the meeting, including the construction of 2,375 work sheds for weavers, loom pit concretisation for 762 weavers, and installation of lighting units for 9,428 weavers.

Additionally, interest-free working capital loans of up to ₹1 lakh were approved for 567 weavers and ancillary workers, with ₹180.78 lakh allocated to the Odisha State Cooperative Bank for interest subvention.

The workshop's overall goal is to create a strong foundation for the sustainable growth of Odisha's handloom, textiles, and handicrafts sectors.



GRACEFUL MOVES: Artistes perform Odissi during 57th Banichitra Cine Awards 2025 at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

PHOTO: BHASKAR NAYAK

1 held in Sishu Bhawan assault; 7 at large

Past enmity over cricket match led to planned attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: The Airport Police have arrested a 39-year-old man in connection with a brutal assault near Sishu Bhawan Square that left a youth critically injured. The accused, identified as Ismile Mohammad of Delanga, was nabbed Wednesday after a dramatic chase.

According to Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) Rabindranath Meher, three other suspects were detained Tuesday,



but around seven miscreants involved in the attack are still

absconding.

The incident occurred around 9pm Monday when Ismile and his associates allegedly targeted Vicky Nayak and his friend. The group chased them with sharp weapons. While Vicky's friend managed to escape, Vicky was cornered and stabbed multiple times, leaving him critically injured.

Police said the attack stemmed from a recent clash during a cricket match. Vicky had added a new player to his team without consulting others, which reportedly angered Ismile's group. The argument escalated into threats and ultimately led to the murder attempt.

Meher said the group had plotted the attack over the past few days, and efforts are on to trace the remaining accused.

The Airport Police have booked Ismile under Sections 115 (2), 109, 351 (2) (3), and 3 (5) of BNS, along with Section 25 (1) (a) of Arms Act. He was produced before a local court Wednesday.

Youth drowns in pond during Chandan Yatra

Puri: A youth drowned in Narendra Pond Wednesday during the 'Chapakhela' ritual of the Chandan Yatra festival in the holy town of Puri. Fire services personnel and lifeguards recovered the body, which was then sent to the District Headquarters Hospital for post-mortem by Kumbharpara Police. The youth remains unidentified, according to police sources. The incident occurred despite multiple safety measures implemented by the administration to prevent accidents and drowning. In response to last year's tragic firecracker mishap during the concluding 'Bhaumi' festival - which claimed the lives of 17 devotees, the administration had ramped up safety protocols this year.

Oppn slams govt over teacher transfer rule

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: The Congress and BJD have sharply opposed the state government's decision to let MPs and MLAs recommend teachers' transfers within their constituencies, calling it arbitrary and vulnerable to misuse.

According to an official letter addressed to the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Education, legislators can now propose the transfer of up to 15 teachers—covering both elementary and secondary levels—within their own constituencies.

These recommendations are to be submitted to the respective District Collectors, who will forward them to the District Level Transfer Committee (DLTC) for consideration.

This provision is applicable only for the current academic year, with a submission window from May 15 to June 15. Officials clarified that it is a one-time measure.

However, the decision has drawn sharp criticism from opposition parties. Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Bhakta Charan Das said the move undermines democratic institutions. "It appears the government is shifting executive powers to MPs and MLAs. Already, Panchayati Raj bodies, Zilla Parishads, and municipalities have been stripped of authority. This decision will only lead to corruption and favouritism," he stated.

Echoing similar concerns, BJD spokesperson Lekhashree Samantsinghar said that transfers should be policy-driven, not influenced by political figures. "Most MPs and MLAs in the state belong to the BJP. This will pave the way for biased transfers. If this continues, soon recommendations may also extend to doctors and engineers," she warned.

These sculptures were displayed across London as part of a free art trail in iconic locations including Buckingham Palace, Battersea Power Station, the Royal Albert Hall, Sloane Street and Canary Wharf. The King and Queen, joint Presidents of Elephant Family since 2014, were introduced to participating artists including Indian heritage artists Jag Sihra and Shantanu and Nikhil.

"Wonders of the Wild is a celebration of art and nature, which also serves to raise awareness and funds to support our critical conservation work," said British Asian Trust CEO Richard Hawkes.

BMC initiates public grievance redressal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: The ward-level public grievance hearings will commence from Thursday under its jurisdiction, announced Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC). Citizens will be invited to provide feedback on work completed in each ward and suggest future course of action, if needed.

BMC Mayor, deputy mayor, standing committee chairpersons, local corporators, additional commissioner, deputy commissioner, departmental officers, officials from the engineering division, WATCO, ward officers, community organisers, sanitary inspectors, swachh supervisors, and swachh sathis will be present at the hearings.

Additionally, representatives from various residential associations, members of Self Help Groups (SHGs), slum organisation leaders, senior citizens, general public, and officials from local clubs of the concerned ward will also be in attendance.

Min reviews paddy procurement

Grievance redressal centre established to ensure smooth rabi paddy procurement and protect farmers interests across the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 14: In a move to protect the interests of farmers during the Rabi season, the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd has set up a centralised monitoring and grievance redressal centre to ensure smooth and transparent procurement of paddy. The procurement process commenced statewide Wednesday.

Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra visited the centre to assess the operational readiness and effectiveness of the system. During his visit, he closely reviewed the paddy procurement process at a mandi and inspected key mechanisms such as the CCTV monitoring system and vehicle tracking facilities used for transporting paddy from the mandi to rice mills.

The Minister also engaged di-



rectly with farmers and nodal officers present at the procurement centre. He enquired about their experiences and challenges during the process, assuring them of timely intervention in case of any difficulties.

To address grievances, farmers can lodge complaints through the toll-free number 1967. Patra directed officials to act swiftly on every complaint to ensure farmers do not face unnecessary delays or harassment during procurement.

State Food Supply Corporation managing director K Sudarshan Chakraborty briefed the Minister on various operational measures being taken at the centre to ensure prompt grievance resolution.

Senior officials from the department and corporation were present during the inspection, reinforcing the government's commitment to farmer welfare.

King Charles honours Indian elephant charity

Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla awarded an Indian charity's elephant conservation efforts at a gala fundraising event in London, organised to celebrate collaborative global efforts to protect the natural habitat of animals.

Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar collected the prestigious Mark Shand Elephant Conservation Award on behalf of Aaranyak's Elephant Research and Conservation Division at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, west London, Tuesday night.

Aaranyak, fostering conservation of biodiversity in Northeast India, is a partner charity of the Elephant Family - a UK-headquartered initiative launched by Queen Camilla's late brother Mark Shand.

Now part of the Charles-founded British Asian Trust, the charity has raised more than GBP 22

million since its birth in 2002 to work in partnership with conservation experts on the ground to tackle the challenges facing Asia's wildlife and the communities that live alongside them.

"It just seems to me that this is a great example of why collaboration is far better than conflict," said King Charles.

The glittering event, entitled 'Wonders of the Wild: An Evening of Art and Conservation' and sponsored by Swiss luxury brand Chopard, was attended by around 250 high-profile guests including members of the royal family.

It marked the grand finale of the Elephant Family's Big Egg Hunt, delivered in partnership with Clarence Court as a campaign featuring more than 120 giant egg sculptures designed by leading names from fashion, art and design.



These sculptures were displayed across London as part of a free art trail in iconic locations including Buckingham Palace, Battersea Power Station, the Royal Albert Hall, Sloane Street and Canary Wharf. The King and Queen, joint Presidents of Elephant Family since 2014, were introduced to participating artists including Indian heritage artists Jag Sihra and Shantanu and Nikhil.

"Wonders of the Wild is a celebration of art and nature, which also serves to raise awareness and funds to support our critical conservation work," said British Asian Trust CEO Richard Hawkes.

"Elephant Family partners with local organisations in Asia to reduce human wildlife conflict, increase biodiversity and invest in research and education programmes. Our mission is to create environments where people and wildlife can thrive together," he said.

Elephant Family believes in using the power of art to inspire action for wildlife. It works with local partners in Asia to promote conservation and coexistence so that people and animals can safely share space.

"True to our founder, the guiding principle of Elephant Family has always been to raise awareness of wildlife conservation in the most joyful ways possible," added Hawkes.

Since 2020, it has aligned with the British Asian Trust - founded in 2007 by then Prince Charles to positively impact the lives of millions in South Asia.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	37.4°	36.6°
Min Temp	27.9°	27.0°
Humidity	72%	81%
Rainfall	TRACE	NII

FORECAST
Partly cloudy sky with thunder lightning

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	81330.56	▲ 182.34
NIFTY	24666.90	▲ 88.55
DOLLAR	85.34	▲ 0.08
EURO	95.67	▲ 0.26
GOLD	₹92,351	▼ ₹1308
SILVER	₹95,400	▼ ₹1370

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Temple land grab hits rev, may mar Rath Yatra



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 14: With a little over a month left for the Rath Yatra at Lord Baladev Temple (Tulasi Kshetra) at Ichhapur in this town, the shrine authorities and devotees apprehend that non-availability of funds due to encroachment on temple land might hamper the conduct of the annual festival, a report said.

Since the temple lands remain under encroachment, the fund required for the conduct of rituals and festivals gets blocked, the report added.

Ahead of the June 27 Rath Yatra, ceremonial selection of timber for Lord Baladev's chariot, known as 'Brahma Taladhwa', was performed on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya. However, with the cost of organising rituals, including the Rath Yatra goes up by ₹50 lakh annually, the temple is facing a serious fund crunch in organising the annual sojourn of the deities and various other festivals held round the year. Much of this cost is currently met through donations and auctions of temple shops and offerings, but these sources are

10 acre, a cattle haat on 2 acre and a pond on 8 acre. Meanwhile, the remaining 160 acre barren land and various unused properties produce zero income.

Even the yield from the 192.86 acres of cultivable land under direct control of the temple is quite inadequate which stands at just 350 sacks of paddy annually. According to Mohanty, the cost of land tax and water charges alone far exceeds the income.

Papun Kumar Swain, president of a voluntary outfit Baladev Sena, recalled that a meeting chaired by the then Law minister in 2007 issued directives to the District Collector to recover the encroached land. However, 18 years later, no concrete action has been taken in this regard.

Several locals like Rajesh Kumar Behera blamed both administrative inaction and indifference by the temple trust board for this impasse.

Servitors Gagan Patri, Nrusingha Prasad Patri, Jyotiranjana Patri, and Shashikant Suar, said daily rituals, festivals, and Rath Yatra activities require consistent annual funding exceeding ₹50 lakh. They argue that public donations, chariot auction proceeds, and sales from the allotment of stalls are not enough.

Given the religious and cultural importance of Tulasi Kshetra, devotees have called on the state government to establish a dedicated administrative mechanism to manage the temple affairs. Such a step, they believe, would ensure smooth conduct of rituals and traditions.

Arun Kumar Nayak, Sub-Collector and current chairman of the Trust Board, confirmed that efforts are underway to recover encroached temple lands.

proving inadequate.

Devotees and local stakeholders argue that if encroached temple lands are recovered, the financial condition of the temple could improve significantly. According to Pratap Kumar Mohanty, a local Right to Information (RTI) activist, a 1974 state government order under Sections 6 and 7 of the Endowment Act had officially allotted 866.99 acres of land to Lord Baladev. Despite paying land revenue and water taxes, more than 100 acres of this land remain under illegal occupation.

Among the encroachments, 232 acres of land are held by former tenants (marfatdars) while 117.35 acres are with individuals referred to as 'Sikimi' tenants. Meanwhile, no revenue from these lands is being deposited into the endowment trust fund.

Only 146 acres under the trust board's control generate income. However, these funds are allocated for another Lakshmanjew temple in Kusiapala under Derabish block while the rest is spent on temple use.

The temple is situated on 2.2-acre land, Ratha Danda on

2 killed, 15 injured as pickup auto overturns

POST NEWS NETWORK

Aska, May 14: Two women were killed and 15 others injured after a pickup auto-rickshaw overturned near Bhetanai under Kotinada police limits along Aska-Balipada main road late Tuesday night.

The deceased were identified as Gayatri Gouda, 25, and Sarojini Sahu, 50, both residents of Bhetanai.

The injured were identified as Barsha Jena, Sahi Jena, Basanti Gouda, Renu Gouda, Kabiata Gouda, Shivananda Gouda, Sagar Gouda, Khushi Gouda, Pinky Sethi, Rohan Sethi, Radha Gouda, Kuja Gouda, Yamuna Sahu, Lata Sethi and Monalisa Sethi. While some of them are currently recuperating at Aska government hospital, seven of them, who are in critical condition, were shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur.

The accident occurred around 11:30pm when the vehicle, reportedly carrying passengers returning from a temple ceremony, lost balance and overturned. The passengers were returning from a temple consecration event held at Sanakholi village.

Court reserves verdict in Patnagarh blast case

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Bolangir, May 14: A court in Bolangir district Wednesday completed hearing in the 2018 Patnagarh wedding gift blast case. The Patnagarh Additional District Judge (ADJ) court reserved the judgement which is expected to be pronounced May 28, a government advocate said.

Two persons, including the groom, were killed in the blast which occurred when the groom was opening a gift packet February 23, 2018, a day after his wedding reception. The incident sparked an outrage across the state. The case was being investigated by the Crime Branch of Odisha Police.

"We have duly proved all evidence, collected against the accused Punjilal Meher during the investigation, before the court. We have not left any missing link in proving the evidence," government counsel Chittaranjan Kanungo said.

He said the arguments were based on circumstantial evidence as no direct evidence was there in this case.

Pramod Mishra, the counsel



for the accused, said the prosecution had started the arguments in the final phase of the case May 9 and the trial was completed during the day.

Soumya Sekhar, a man in his mid-twenties, and his 85-year-old grandmother were killed, while his wife, Seema Sahoo, sustained critical injuries when a parcel bomb disguised as a wedding gift exploded at their Patnagarh home in Bolangir district February 23, 2018. The blast had taken place when the groom opened a gift pack.

Following a request by the new bride and her family, the then CM Naveen Patnaik had ordered a CB probe into the incident.

The CB took over the investigation March 23, 2018 and arrested Meher in April, 2018. He is currently lodged in the Patnagarh sub-jail.



BEATING THE HEAT: Boys take a plunge into a canal near Hemasurpada in Angul district on a hot summer afternoon Tuesday

OP PHOTO

Jaleswar SDPO cries mental harassment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, May 14: Jaleswar sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Brajamohan Pradhan has accused Balasore SP Raj Prasad of mental harassment and written a letter to senior authorities warning that he may take extreme steps, like suicide, if the issue is not addressed promptly.

He has reportedly mentioned in his letter that he was repeatedly hurled with unsavoury remarks, humiliated and warned of departmental action even suspension from service. According to the letter, Pradhan alleged that he was repeatedly humiliated by the SP in front of subordinates and was assigned responsibilities beyond his capacity. Despite currently holding the DSP post at Balasore



headquarters, he was also made to continue serving as SDPO in Jaleswar.

Pradhan, 58, stated that the daily travel between Jaleswar and Balasore has taken a toll on his health. He also said that he was not provided with a typist to assist with office work at headquarters, which created further challenges. When he raised the issue, he was allegedly asked to resign.

"This treatment felt biased to me," Pradhan wrote in the

letter, noting that his mental health has deteriorated under the pressure. He warned that if his SDPO responsibilities are not withdrawn, he may be forced to end his life.

Pradhan had previously informed superiors April 4 about his inability to continue as SDPO failing which he will commit suicide. He approached Eastern Range DIG Satyajit Nayak with the complaint May 7.

On the other hand, while at Jaleswar police station, Pradhan suddenly fell ill and was admitted to GK Bhattar Hospital in Jaleswar. DIG Nayak visited him at the hospital and enquired about his health condition. The DIG said the allegations will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken based on the findings.

Ship with Pak crew: Security tightened

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Paradip, May 14: Odisha Police Wednesday bolstered security at port town Paradip after the arrival of a ship with 21 Pakistani crew members on board, officials said.

The 'MT Siren II' with a total of 25 crew members reached Paradip port early Wednesday from South Korea via Singapore, carrying crude oil for Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, they said.

The rest of the crew comprises two Indians, a Sri Lankan and a Thai national, the officials said. Security arrangements have been tightened by Odisha Marine Police and the CISF after receiving information about the crew members from the Immigration department, said Marine Police Station IIC Babita Dehuri.

Paradip port had been put on high alert in the wake of the military conflict between India and Pakistan.

The ship is anchored at single point mooring (SPM), located around 20 km from the shore, the officials said. "Orders have also been issued that no crew will be allowed to leave the ship during evacuation of crude oil," the police officer said.

Two wildlife poachers get 4 years in prison

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, May 14: A local court here in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday sentenced two persons to four years of imprisonment and slapped a penalty of ₹50 lakh each while delivering a verdict on a wildlife poaching case.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Debashish Mohanty found the accused guilty and stated in the ruling that failure to pay the fine would result in an additional year of imprisonment. The convicts were identified as Nirmal Birua, 27, and Prem Munda, 35, both residents of Badajunapala under Kaptipada police limits.

According to case details, the

duo had illegally entered Similipal Tiger Reserve's (STR) Bagahanta range under the southern division on the night of June 23, 2020, with the intent to hunt wild animals. They camped overnight on a 'mancha' (an elevated stage made on trees) and allegedly hunted a deer early June 24 morning. The venison was then cut and taken home.

Acting on credible intelligence, Forest department personnel from Kaptipada range, along with staffers from Podadiha section, Similipal Tiger Protection Force, and Bagahanta forest unit, launched a coordinated operation. The accused were detained and interrogated. Authorities seized two bows, 12 arrows, a machete,

Maoist camp busted

Nuapada: Security forces uncovered a Maoist camp inside the protected forest near Gatibeda in Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary under Komna police limits Wednesday. Huge quantities of Maoist ration supplies were seized from the site, according to SP Gundala Reddy Raghavendra, who addressed a presser at the district headquarters here. The Maoists had set up a camp in the protected jungle with plans to launch a major attack targeting security personnel and other key installations. Intelligence inputs received by Nuapada police indicated suspicious Maoist activity in the area. Acting on a tip-off, a joint combing operation was launched in the morning under the direction of the SP. The team uncovered the deserted camp and seized various essential supplies, including rice, pulses, salt and other items.

Keonjhar village turns into bat sanctuary

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 14: At a time when bat population across the world is dwindling due to emerging environment hazards, locals of a sleepy village in Ghatagaon block of this district have taken it upon themselves to protect the flying mammals, according to a report.

Balabhadrapur village, widely known for its craftsmanship in terracotta ware, has recently gained attention for becoming a safe haven for thousands of bats. For years, these nocturnal animals have made their homes in the trees, especially tamarind and other native species in the village. The efforts of the villagers have earned wide applause from several quarters.

During the day, the bats hang silently from trees and by evening they take to the skies in search of food, returning by



dawn. Their return is marked by soft, chirping sounds that villagers say have become part of their daily lives. The sight of hundreds of bats roosting creates a unique natural ambiance, drawing visitors' attention.

Locals say the bats have never caused any harm or any problem for the villagers. The village community not only refrains from doing any harm to them, but also ensures their protection from poachers. During summer, when temperatures soar, villagers grow concerned about heatstroke risks for the bats. Hundreds die each year due to extreme heat.

When heatwaves strike, Forest and Fire Services department officials sometimes assist the villagers with water-spraying operations to help cool the bats. Amid the broader crisis of biodiversity loss driven by climate change, villagers see their bats as a symbol of resilience.

Residents have called on the Forest department to implement dedicated conservation measures and offer formal support for their efforts.

"There aren't enough trees here for birds and animals to thrive," said Amarendra Sahu, a local resident. "If we plant more saplings, create

water sources and post guards for their protection, it will not only help the bats survive here but also attract more tourists."

Chaturbhuj Rana, an experienced terracotta artisan, recalled seeing bats in tamarind trees since his childhood. "They've always been here since long," he said. "But the threat of heatstroke during summer is a concern," he added.

Ghatagaon forest range officer Saroj Kumar Mishra acknowledged the villagers' efforts. "It's encouraging to see a community so invested in wildlife conservation. Thanks to intermittent rains that have prevented heatstroke incidents so far. But when needed, water-spraying is arranged."

Balabhadrapur's transformation from a terracotta village to a sanctuary for bats is not just a local success story — it's a model of grassroots conservation.

MCL	
Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited) Jagruti Vihar, Burla - 768020, Dist. - Sambalpur, Odisha Ph. (EPABX) : 0663-2542461 to 469 Website : www.mahanadicoal.in	
Notice	
"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in , respective subsidiary Company, (MCL, www.mahanadicoal.in), CIL e-procurement portal https://coalindiatenders.nic.in and Central Public Procurement Portal https://eprocure.gov.in In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal https://gem.gov.in ".	
R-5253	

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, JALESWAR, BALASORE	
No. 2570	Date - 09.05.2025
"e" Procurement Notice	
Bid Identification No. PSJLS_01/2025-26	
No.1 - Bid Documents consisting of Work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractors and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Government website i.e., www.tendersodisha.gov.in	
1. Name of the Work	: Construction of Common Facility Centre (CFC) for Tassar Weaving Activities of Producers' Groups at Makidia
2. No. of works	: 01 No.
3. Estimated Cost	: 24,76,952.00
4. Period of Completion	: 120 days
5. Bid Submission Start Date	: 16.05.2025 at 10:00 A.M.
6. Bid Submission Closing Date	: 30.05.2025 upto 05:00 P.M.
7. Bid Opening Date	: 31.05.2025 at 11:00 A.M.
8. Name of Officer inviting Bid	: Block Development Officer, Jaleswar
Further details can be seen from the procurement portal i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in	
OIPR-19145/11/0003/2526	Sd./- Block Development Officer Jaleswar

EAST COAST RAILWAY	
Tender No. 10-KUR-TRD-OT-2025-26	
NAME OF WORK : MANNING OF ISOLATOR OPERATION FOR BOT DOWN LINE, ENGINE ESCAPE LINE, PLOT-14 AND PLOT-15 INSIDE PARADEEP PORT YARD OF M/s PPT AT PARADEEP (PRDP) FOR THREE YEARS.	
Advertisement Value (₹)	: 66,66,244.64
EMD (₹)	: 1,33,300.00
Tender Document Cost (₹)	: 5,900/-
Period of Completion	: 1098 Days.
Bidding Start Date	: 16.05.2025.
Date and Time of Closing of Tender	: At 1300 Hrs. of 30.05.2025.
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.	
Complete details and Tender documents will be available at website http://www.ireps.gov.in	
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Khurda Road	

EAST COAST RAILWAY	
Tender Notice No.: SBP-ELECT-2025-T-246	
NAME OF WORK : ELECTRICAL WORKS FOR "PROVISION OF TRACK MACHINE STAFF AMENITIES AT BAMUR, CHARMAL AND HANDAPA STATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH DEVELOPMENT OF TM SIDING AT CHARMAL, BAMUR & HANDAPA STATIONS IN JIJUMURA - KEREJANG SECTION" OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.	
Approx. cost of the work	: ₹ 44,19,367.16, EMD : ₹ 88,400.00
Completion Period of the Work	: Six Months from the date of issue of LOA.
Tender Closing Date and Time	: At 1530 hrs. of 30.05.2025.
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.	
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website www.ireps.gov.in	
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website fifteen (15) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.	
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (GJ/PR-124/Q/25-26) Sambalpur	

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THE MOTHER

Looming Disaster

Despite a succession of shocks since 2020, the global economy has held up remarkably well – so far. But the margin for error is dwindling. Total global debt is now nearly 25 per cent higher than it was on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, when it already was at an all-time high. This overhang could undercut all economies' ability to shield themselves against the latest shock: higher trade tariffs.

Although debt is crucial for driving economic growth, it should be understood as a form of deferred taxation. By borrowing rather than taxing, governments can make long-term investments that will benefit future taxpayers without burdening the current generation; or they can prop up national growth and incomes during an economic emergency, when hiking taxes would only deepen the downturn.

Eventually, however, the piper must be paid, and if national income does not grow faster than the cost of borrowing, taxes must be raised to repay the debt. Persistently high debt thus becomes a barrier to economic progress.

That barrier has seldom been higher. Over the last 15 years, developing countries got hooked on debt, which they amassed at a record-setting clip: six percentage points of GDP per year, on average. Such rapid debt buildups often end in tears. Indeed, the odds that they will trigger a financial crisis are roughly 50-50.

Moreover, this particular surge has been punctuated by the fastest increase in interest rates in four decades. Borrowing costs doubled for half of all developing economies, with net interest costs as a share of government revenues rising from less than 9 per cent in 2007 to about 20 per cent in 2024. That alone constitutes a crisis.

Although the world has so far managed to dodge a "systemic" financial meltdown of the 2008-09 variety, too many developing economies are now in a doom loop. To service their debts, many are cutting the investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure that they need to assure future growth.

This is especially true of the 78 poor countries that are eligible to borrow from the World Bank's International Development Association. These countries are home to one-quarter of humanity, representing a large slice of the 1.2 billion young people who will enter the global workforce in the next 10-15 years. Yet policymakers around the world have opted to tempt fate. In another triumph of hope over experience, they are betting that global growth will accelerate – and that interest rates will fall – by just enough to defuse the debt bomb.

Such passivity is understandable. It has been extremely difficult to devise a twenty-first-century system capable of ensuring global debt sustainability and swift debt restructuring for countries that need it. In the absence of such a system, the progress that has occurred has been too slow to avoid rising debt dangers.

But the world cannot afford yet another decade of drift and denial where debt is concerned. Under current policies, global growth will not speed up anytime soon, which means that sovereign debt-to-GDP ratios are likely to climb for the remainder of this decade.

Today's trade wars and record-breaking levels of policy uncertainty have only made the outlook worse. At the start of 2025, the consensus forecast among economists was predicted 2.6 per cent global growth this year. That number is now down to 2.2 per cent – nearly a third lower than the average that prevailed in the 2010s.

Nor will interest rates fall. In advanced economies, interest rates set by central banks are expected to average 3.4 per cent this year and next, more than five times the annual average between 2010 and 2019. This will compound developing economies' difficulties. In an era of scarce public resources, it will take an all-out mobilisation of private capital to boost growth and development over the next five years.

But foreign private capital is unlikely to flow into highly indebted economies with weak growth prospects. Private investors will correctly assume that any gains from economic growth will simply be taxed to pay off the debt. Thus, reducing debt should be the top priority for developing economies with persistently high debt-to-GDP ratios.

But we also need a clear-eyed view of the broader problem: the global apparatus for assessing the sustainability of a country's debt urgently needs to be upgraded. The current system is too quick to decide that countries merely need loans to tide them over, when most low-income countries today are in fact insolvent and will need debt write-offs. Governments also will need to ditch the habit of borrowing from domestic creditors; the rise in domestic debt is strangling domestic private-sector initiative.

After reducing debt, the next priority is to accelerate growth. It is foolish to pretend that growth will magically return. Policies that impede trade and investment – like tariffs and non-tariff barriers – should be rolled back as soon and as much as possible. For many developing economies, cutting tariffs equally with respect to all trading partners could be the fastest way to restore growth. Developing economies also have much to gain by fostering a more investment-friendly regulatory environment. And those gains can be used to shift the national focus back to development, particularly by ratcheting up investments in health, education, and infrastructure.

As the saying goes, when you're in a hole, it is wise to stop digging. An era of extraordinarily low interest rates encouraged too many countries to spend far beyond their means. A string of catastrophes – both natural and man-made – made it impossible for them to do anything else in the last five years. But prudence is now essential. Governments should revert to previous norms on what constitutes excessive sovereign debt. Call it the 40-60 maximum: 40 per cent of GDP for low-income economies, 60 per cent for high-income economies, with everyone else in between.

The writer is Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics at the World Bank.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Bruhaspati Samal

ACCORDING TO THE HDR, INEQUALITY REDUCES INDIA'S HDI BY AS MUCH AS 30.7%, ONE OF THE HIGHEST LOSSES IN THE REGION



Indermit Gill

ALTHOUGH THE WORLD HAS SO FAR MANAGED TO DODGE A 'SYSTEMIC' FINANCIAL MELTDOWN OF THE 2008-09 VARIETY, TOO MANY DEVELOPING ECONOMIES ARE NOW IN A DOOM LOOP



To break into the high human development tier (HDI > 0.700), it must address several persistent grey areas that hinder inclusive progress

India has demonstrated remarkable progress in recent years on the Human Development Index (HDI), with the 2025 Human Development Report (HDR) recently released by the UNDP marking a notable rise in the country's global standing. India moved up three spots, from rank 133 in 2022 to 130 in 2023, and its HDI value rose from 0.676 to 0.685. This advancement reflects continued improvements in key areas such as life expectancy, education, and per capita income. However, despite being on a promising trajectory, India remains in the medium human development category. To break into the high human development tier (HDI > 0.700), it must address several persistent grey areas that hinder inclusive progress.

A major stumbling block is inequality, which continues to erode India's overall human development achievements. According to the HDR, inequality reduces India's HDI by as much as 30.7%, one of the highest losses in the region. This erosion stems from disparities in income, access to quality education and healthcare, and socio-economic exclusion. While economic growth has benefited segments of the population, the benefits have not reached everyone equally. The income gap is stark: the top 10% of population holds nearly 57% of total income, while the bottom half holds only 13%. Bridging this divide will require the government to implement more progressive taxation policies, increase investments in social safety nets, and expand employment generation schemes such as MGNREGA.

Gender disparity is another area that demands urgent attention. Though steps like the recent constitutional amendment reserving one-third of legislative seats for women are promising, the gap in women's participation in the economy and governance remains wide. Female labour force partici-

from 58.6 years in 1990. Yet, significant gaps persist, especially in rural and marginalised communities. Rural areas, which house the majority of the population, continue to suffer from inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of trained medical staff. Public health expenditure remains low at just 2.1% of GDP, well below the global average of 6%. India must increase its health spending to at least 3% of GDP and strengthen the reach and quality of primary healthcare services.

India has rapidly embraced digital technology, particularly in financial inclusion and e-governance. However, internet access remains skewed. Only 38% of rural households are connected to internet, compared to 72% of urban households. While India boasts the world's highest self-reported AI skills penetration, this digital progress does not reflect the experiences of most rural Indians, where only 15% of workforce is digitally literate. If left unaddressed, this divide could deepen socio-economic disparities and hinder access to education, healthcare, and employment.

Another under-addressed issue is the urban-rural development imbalance. Urban areas enjoy better infrastructure, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, while

rural India—home to nearly two-thirds of the population—lags in nearly every dimension of development. This disparity is reflected in the rural HDI, estimated at 0.638 compared to 0.741 in urban areas. Rural development requires a holistic strategy that includes localised industrialisation, improved transport and communication networks, and better public services.

India's development is also increasingly threatened by climate vulnerabilities. As one of the most climate-affected countries in the world, India loses approximately 2.5% of its GDP annually due to climate-related disasters, according to the World Bank. Over 600 million Indians are at risk of climate-induced livelihood disruptions, especially in agriculture-dependent and coastal regions. Climate change undermines health, food security, and water availability—all critical aspects of human development. The path forward requires integrating climate adaptation strategies into development planning.

While India's steady climb on the HDI ladder is commendable, achieving a score above 0.700—and joining the ranks of high human development countries—will require a concerted push across multiple fronts. Reducing inequality, empowering women, strengthening public services, bridging the digital divide, and fostering sustainable development are no longer optional—they are imperative. These efforts must involve government policy, private sector innovation, academic research, and community engagement. But moving into the high human development category will depend on how equitably and sustainably the nation consolidates its gains. The time to act decisively on these grey areas is now.

The writer is a service union representative and a columnist.

SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

Green jobs for a sustainable world

In recent years, the global job market has seen a transformative shift towards sustainability and one of the most exciting developments is the rise of green jobs. These are employment opportunities that contribute directly to environmental conservation, sustainable development, and the fight against climate change. Green jobs are not just a solution to environmental challenges; they are a gateway to future employment for the youth globally. With a focus on renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable agriculture, young professionals are leading the way to a cleaner, more sustainable world. The global transition to a green economy is gaining momentum, with governments, businesses, and individuals increasingly recognising the need to address climate change. According to the International Labour Organization, the green economy could create 60 million new jobs globally by 2030, with the potential for long-term, sustainable employment. The rise of renewable energy, energy efficiency, green manufacturing, sustainable agriculture, and waste management are at the

heart of this transformation. The shift from fossil fuels to renewable sources such as wind, solar, and hydropower is one of the most significant contributors to green job creation. As of 2020, there were more than 12 million renewable energy jobs worldwide, with wind and solar power accounting for a large share. The International Renewable Energy Agency reports that this sector alone could employ 42 million people by 2050. The demand for energy-efficient technologies in buildings, industries, and transport is rapidly growing. The transition to energy-efficient infrastructure, such as smart grids, energy-efficient appliances, and green buildings, provides a wealth of opportunities for technicians, engineers, and project managers. The push for sustainable farming practices, organic agriculture, and sustainable food systems is creating a wide range of employment opportunities. The growing emphasis on recycling, waste-to-energy technologies, and circular economy models is creating job opportunities in waste collection, recycling, material recovery, and envi-

ronmental consultancy. Environmental scientists, conservationists, and ecologists are in high demand as the global community works to conserve biodiversity, protect natural habitats, and manage natural resources more efficiently. India, as one of the largest and fastest-growing economies, is also witnessing a surge in green job opportunities. By 2030, India aims to achieve 500GW of non-fossil fuel capacity and reduce its carbon intensity by 45% compared to 2005 levels. These goals are expected to create millions of green jobs across various sectors. India is a global leader in renewable energy production. The country's rapidly growing solar and wind energy sectors are set to create thousands of jobs for technicians, engineers, project managers, and researchers. With India's solar capacity reaching 45.6GW as of 2022, the sector is expected to continue its upward trajectory. India generates an enormous amount of waste, with major urban centers facing significant waste management challenges. The need for waste management experts, recycling

specialists, and waste-to-energy engineers is growing rapidly. While the growth of green jobs offers exciting prospects for youth, it is essential for them to be equipped with the right skills. Educational institutions and vocational training centers in India and around the world are increasingly focusing on sustainability-focused curricula. The rise of specialised courses in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, environmental science, and green business practices is paving the way for youth to build careers in green industries. As nations transition towards greener economies, young people are poised to play a vital role in driving the change. Whether in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, or waste management, the green sector offers diverse, future-proof employment opportunities. For the youth, embracing green jobs means becoming part of a global movement towards a sustainable future—one that is powered by innovation, resilience, and a shared commitment to protecting the planet. The writer is senior human resource professional.



Debabrata Dash

FOR THE YOUTH, EMBRACING GREEN JOBS MEANS BECOMING PART OF A GLOBAL MOVEMENT TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 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

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

Economic pragmatism

Sir, President Trump's recent tariff retreat marks one of the most abrupt and resounding reversals of economic policy in recent memory. After imposing severe tariffs on Chinese goods, the Trump administration has now agreed to roll back most of the punitive measures. This agreement represents a clear shift toward economic pragmatism and acknowledges the strain these policies placed on American prosperity. It is the second major reversal in a week, signaling a broader pullback from the administration's aggressive trade stance. Under the new agreement, the US will eliminate much of the 145% tariff imposed on Chinese imports in early April. What remains is a 10% global tariff, plus a 20% levy attributed to China's role in the fentanyl trade, combining for a total of 30%. In return, China will reduce its retaliatory tariffs from 125% to 10%. While only a temporary 90-day arrangement, the deal offers a reprieve from the escalating economic tensions and provides a window for further negotiations. Investors have responded positively to the easing of tariffs, with estimates suggesting around \$300 billion in relief due to these policy reversals. Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

United by love

Sir, Families are the foundation of society, providing love, support, and security. On International Day of Families 2025, with the theme "Family-Oriented Policies for Sustainable Development: Towards the Second World Summit for Social Development," we are reminded of the vital role families play in shaping individuals and communities. Recognized by the United Nations, this day encourages understanding, respect, and togetherness, highlighting how family-friendly policies can address global challenges like poverty, climate change, and social conflicts. Amid rapid digital communication, families remain a source of strength, teaching values like sharing and resilience. As we look forward to the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, it is crucial to focus on policies that support diverse families worldwide. On this special day, let's honor the bonds that make our lives meaningful and work together to ensure that all families are respected, supported, and able to thrive. Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

WISDOM CORNER

It is through gratitude for the present moment that the spiritual dimension of life opens up. ECKHART TOLLE

To err is human; to forgive, divine. ALEXANDER POPE

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy. THICH NHAT HANH

Bharti makes village proud

Jhunni Kalan village, the ancestral home of Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti, has become the epicentre of pride, as the decorated officer was one of the armed forces' team members who helped in scripting India's most daring counter-terror ops

OPERATION SINDOOR



I have nothing to say much about my son. The entire country knows what he has done for the nation. It was his dream to join the armed forces. It's a proud moment for us, for the people of Purnea and also for the countrymen

URMILA DEVI | MOTHER OF AIR MARSHAL AWADHESH KUMAR BHARTI

courage during 'Operation Sindoore', and my son played a crucial role. The villagers are elated — our chests are swelling with pride. He has been a disciplined human being since childhood," he added. Yadav said his son had not mentioned anything about the operation during a recent call. "I came to know about his role from neighbours in Srinagar Hata, Purnea town and from villagers, but we could hardly believe it. People have been calling and visiting to congrat-

ulate us," he added. Jhunni Kalan village, the ancestral home of Air Marshal Bharti, has become the epicentre of pride, as the decorated officer was one of the armed forces' team members who helped in scripting India's most daring counter-terror operations. 'Operation Sindoore', launched May 7, saw the armed forces conduct precision air strikes on terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in retaliation to the April 22 Pahalgam terror at-

tack that claimed 26 lives. Bharti's mother Urmila Devi said, "I have nothing much to say about my son. The entire country knows what he has done for the nation. It was his dream to join the armed forces. It's a proud moment for us, for the people of Purnea, and countrymen". "Bhaiya did a great job for the country," said Mithilesh Kumar, Bharti's younger brother, who works in a pharmaceutical firm. "He hadn't spoken to us since the operation began. Today, after so many days, he finally called. People from across Purnea town and our village are coming to congratulate us. The whole village is celebrating," Mithilesh told PTI Videos. "The last time he visited us was about a year ago. He met everyone with the same warmth as always. Our country is safe only because of our soldiers," he added. Bharti did his primary schooling at a government school in Purnea and then at the Tilaiya Sainik School in Jharkhand. Later, he went to the National Defence Academy in Pune and was commissioned into the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in 1987. He was awarded the President's Air Force Medal in 2008 and was promoted to Air Marshal in 2023. 'Operation Sindoore' was launched on the night of May 7 with precision attacks on nine sites in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and even inside Pakistani territory that destroyed training camps of known terror organisations.

In a first, Delhi's manual scavengers to get PPE kits

According to data, 102 manual scavengers died in 2023, 116 in 2024, and 30 have died in 2025 so far. In Delhi alone, four workers have died this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: For the first time, nearly 4,000 manual scavengers in Delhi will be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits ahead of the monsoon season. The kits will include 42 safety items such as helmets with lights, gas protection masks, gumboots, protective clothing, gloves, and barrier creams designed to protect against hazardous gases and skin irritants.

The initiative is part of the Centre's Namaste (National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem) scheme launched in 2023-24 to ensure secure working conditions, financial assistance, and social security benefits for sanitation workers, especially those engaged in cleaning sewers and septic tanks. Delhi Social Welfare Minister Ravinder Indraj Singh told PTI that around 4,000 scavengers will get PPE kits before the rains begin.

He also directed officials to ensure that all manual scavengers are enrolled under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme. In addition, departments have been instructed to expedite training and rehabilita-



The safety of every sanitation worker is our priority. They must have access to PPE kits and health insurance before the monsoon

RAVINDER INDRAJ SINGH | DELHI SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER

tion efforts for those involved in manual sewer cleaning and to establish adequate Emergency Response Sanitation Units, Singh said.

All district magistrates have been ordered to resolve pending compensation cases related to sewer and septic tank deaths in a time-bound manner, he added. "The safety of every sanitation worker is our priority. They must have access to PPE kits and health insurance before the monsoon," the minister said.

Social activist Bezawada Wilson, founder of the Safai Karam-

chari Andolan, said while PPE kits can help reduce health risks, they do not fully eliminate the dangers faced by manual scavengers.

"This step is welcome, but it still does not prevent the deaths of manual scavengers," said Wilson. Wilson also pointed out that the initiative raises concerns under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, which officially banned manual scavenging in India. "Instead of sending humans into toxic manholes, the government should focus on introducing machines to clean them," he added.

Wilson also shared data on the deaths of manual scavengers, stating that around 102 died in 2023, 116 in 2024, and 30 have died in 2025 so far. In Delhi alone, four workers have died this year, he said.

Red Fort to Qutub Minar, Delhi to spruce up iconic tourist sites



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: The Delhi government plans to enhance the premises of major city monuments including the Red Fort, Lotus Temple and Qutub Minar by installing street furniture such as lamps, benches and shaded seating areas.

The initiative aims to improve the overall tourist experience by making these heritage zones more accessible, welcoming and comfortable.

The beautification will also include clearing encroachments, installing traffic signs and ensuring better walkability.

Delhi Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra said, "We are working closely with officials from the tourism department to transform the areas around Red Fort, Qutub Minar and Lotus Temple into more walkable and pleasant spaces."

"The idea is to not just beautify the surroundings but to make them more functional, safe and

tourist-friendly. We plan to install street lights, benches and sheds to protect visitors from the sun, clear encroachments, and add proper traffic signs and signals," he said.

The government is also preparing to launch a city branding campaign. An agency will soon be appointed for the project and a fresh tagline for Delhi will be selected, Mishra said.

In 2013, the Congress-led Delhi government had organised a public contest to choose a tagline for the city. The tagline 'DilDar Dilli' was chosen and participant Amit Anand had won a prize of ₹50,000 for coining it.

Delhi is home to 174 heritage and tourist spots, including three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, several stepwells (baolis), and many lesser-known monuments. Through this renewed focus on tourism, the government hopes to bring these historical treasures into the spotlight.



BJP supporters take part in a 'Tiranga Yatra' in solidarity with the Indian armed forces, in Patna, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

KIYG revives Barauni's deep-rooted football culture

Over the next three decades, Barauni turned into a cradle of footballing dreams, led by unsung heroes like Chandra Shekhar, and former Mohun Bagan goalkeeper-turned-mentor Sanjeev Kumar Singh, who chose turf over a steady Army career, love for the game over comfort

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Begusarai, May 14: Football ke rang, Begusarai ke sangh. It's more than just a tagline pasted on the pillars of an under-construction flyover leading into this town. It's a quiet revolution that began with broken legs and bruised pride in a forgotten corner of Bihar.

Tucked away from the din of Patna's bustle, in a humble locality of Barauni in Begusarai district, football did not just arrive, it fought its way in. This ground, a patch of land that carries the legacy of a freedom fighter Yamuna Bhagat, became football's unlikely home nearly 80 years ago. But the spark that truly lit its modern-day fire came in

1990, when a hastily assembled team of local girls, untrained and unsure, were battered by a seasoned Muzaffarpur team in an exhibition match, meant to mark the ground's 50th anniversary.

Some hobbled away, some were stretched and all had wounds that cut deeper than skin. But instead of shame, it birthed a movement. "We were humiliated. But we turned that pain into purpose," recalls Chandra Shekhar, a retired schoolteacher and former footballer, whose words carry the weight of generations. "The story of the ground dates back to pre-Independence era, when freedom fighter Yamuna Bhagat started with a library to educate youngsters

BROKEN LEGS AND BRUISED PRIDE



from the oppressed communities upon his release from jail. The real transformation took place in 1990 when we planned to celebrate 50 years of the ground," narrated Chandra while reflecting on the struggles and sacrifices, the village made to turn it into a nursery for young female footballers.

"We had invited two teams for an exhibition match, and only one of the two reached

with whatever funds we could gather to pay them," Chandra Shekhar said.

A year later, armed with courage and fuelled by community spirit, Begusarai's girls returned to the field, not to survive, but to compete. They beat Ara 1-0, a side that had former India striker Poonam in its ranks, in what would be remembered not for the result, but for the resolve.

That one goal was a clarion call: We belong here.

Over the next three decades, Barauni turned into a cradle of footballing dreams, led by unsung heroes like Chandra Shekhar, and former Mohun Bagan goalkeeper-turned-mentor Sanjeev Kumar Singh, who chose turf over a steady Army career, love for the game over comfort.

Together, they nurtured talent, mentored generations and preserved a ground that once broke them and later, built them. Sanjeev candidly admitted that his dedication for football has come at the cost of ignoring the interests and needs of his family but pointed out that someone had to shoulder the responsibility.

"For my family, I'm useless, but I can't help it. I try to support them but football remains my first love. Everyone is busy with their jobs, so someone had to take responsibility. It's a sacrifice born of love, not obligation. A choice that helped this venue host Santosh Trophy matches in 2018, and now, India's flagship youth sporting event," said an emotional Sanjeev.

Today, Begusarai has emerged 12-time state champion, supplies 70 percent of Bihar's squad, and a football culture rooted deep in community pride, Barauni finally finds itself on the national map, hosting the Khelo India Youth Games 2025.

It's the applause for three decades of quiet toil, village-wide sacrifice, and football played with heart, not boots. The scouts from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) are in town, identifying prospects and predictably, many have roots in this very village.

For many, KIYG is a platform. For Barauni, it's validation, a celebration of a village that turned heartbreak into heritage.

INDO-PAK TENSIONS JNU suspends MoU with Turkish Inonu University

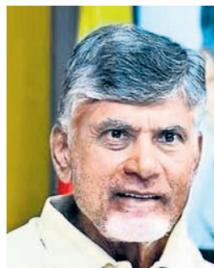
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: Jawaharlal Nehru University has suspended an academic memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Turkiye's Inonu University, citing national security considerations, officials of the university here confirmed Tuesday.

The MoU was inked February 3 for a period of three years. "We have suspended the MoU with Turkiye's Inonu University. Under the pact, there were plans for faculty exchange and student exchange programmes, among others," a JNU official said.

Inonu University, at Malatya in Turkiye, had entered into the academic partnership with JNU as part of efforts to boost cross-cultural research and student collaboration.

The decision to suspend the MoU comes against the backdrop of tensions between India and Pakistan. The two neighbours reached an agreement May 10 to halt military actions after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.



We are now strengthening indigenous breeds, modernising infrastructure, and training dairy farmers as part of the National Livestock Mission. We aim to position Andhra Pradesh as a national model for tech-driven rural growth and contribute to the vision of Swarna (Golden) Andhra by 2047

X ACCOUNT OF CHINA'S GLOBAL TIMES RESTORED IN INDIA

The X account handles of Chinese media houses Global Times and Xinhua Wednesday morning showed that they have been withheld in India in response to a legal request. In the evening, however, the X account of Global Times was restored. During the recent military conflict with Pakistan, the Indian government May 8 ordered to block around 8,000 accounts on X



of the day uote

We often look towards foreign countries, but efforts like these within India are what truly drive the nation forward. I have been told that BEML also plays a major role in the manufacturing of BrahMos and other types of missiles



MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

My path is the path of dharma; the path of dharma is the path of justice, and only justice can make us powerful and capable



YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

The US president has claimed that he secured a ceasefire between India and Pakistan using increased trade as leverage. That statement is shocking



SACHIN PILOT | AICC GENERAL SECRETARY

Acharyakulam shines with 100% results in CBSE Class X, XII exams



POST NEWS NETWORK

In a major academic milestone, Acharyakulam, the residential school run by Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Group, has delivered 100 per cent pass results in the CBSE Class X (High School) and Class XI (Intermediate) examinations.

High school results Atharv topped the Class with an impressive 99.40%, followed by Dhruv with 98%, and Sanya Sejal with 97.80%. Sahaj stood fourth with 97.60%, while Anshuman and Kanhaiya Kumar shared the fifth position with 97.40% each. All 153 students passed the examination, bringing the school average to 86.30%. A total of 21 students earned A-1 grades in all five subjects, and 43 students secured full marks (100/100) in various subjects. 25 students scored above 95%.

Intermediate results The average scores in the Science, Humanities, and Commerce streams were 83.59%, 90.64%, and 90.85% respectively. Siddhesh emerged as the overall school topper with 99%, followed by Aryaman with 98.6% and Ridhima with 98%. All 97 students passed, with an overall school average of 88.38%.

On this proud occasion, Dr Ritambhara Shastrri 'Behen Ji', Vice Chairperson of the Acharyakulam Management Committee, and Principal Swati Munshi congratulated the students, teachers, and staff for their outstanding performance. The celebration was graced by Swami Arjundev, Vice Principal Tapas Kumar Bera, Coordinator Deepa, Chief Hostel Superintendent and Sports Officer Amit along with the entire teaching and non-teaching staff and students.

India rejects China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh

India's reaction came in response to Beijing announcing Chinese names for 27 places in Arunachal Pradesh, including 15 mountains, four passes, two rivers, a lake and five inhabited areas. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Beijing, May 14: India Wednesday outrightly rejected as "vain and preposterous" China renaming some places in Arunachal Pradesh and said such attempts will not alter the "undeniable" reality that the state "was, is, and will" always remain an integral part of India.

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is, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India," he said. It was the fifth time China has renamed places in Arunachal Pradesh.

Hours after India's reaction to Beijing releasing the 27 new names, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian argued that the move is within China's "sovereign rights". "The Chinese government has standardised the names of some parts of Zangnan. This is within China's sovereign rights," he said. Zangnan is the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh.

In April last year too, India had reacted sharply when Beijing released a list of standardised names of 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese Civil Affairs Ministry released the first list of the standardised names of six places in Zangnan in 2017, while the second list of 15 places was issued in 2021 followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

Beijing's decision comes amid efforts by the two countries to normalise ties hit by the more than four-year-long

border standoff in eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). After a gap of nearly five years, India and China last month decided to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, a move that was seen as an attempt to repair the relationship.

The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra was suspended initially in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequently because of the military standoff between the two sides on the LAC in eastern Ladakh. The militaries of India and China completed disengagement of troops at the two remaining friction points of Demchok and Depsang under a pact sealed October 21 last year.

Two days later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in the Russian city of Kazan and agreed to revive various bilateral dialogue mechanisms.

Following the Modi-Xi talks, the two sides held a series of meetings in the last few months which were aimed at normalising the bilateral relations.

SC questions govt over fewer women officers in Army legal branch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: If a woman can fly Rafale fighter jet in the Indian Air Force, then why are fewer women officers in gender neutral posts of Judge Advocate General (legal) branch of the Army, the Supreme Court wondered recently and questioned the Centre's rationale on a 50-50 selection criterion.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan May 8 reserved its verdict on the plea of two officers Arshnoor Kaur and Astha Tyagi, who despite securing 4th and 5th ranks respectively - higher in merit than their male counterparts - weren't selected for the JAG department due to fewer vacancies earmarked for women.

The officers challenged the disproportionate vacancies for men and women and said they could not be selected as there were only three vacancies for women out of the total six posts. "Prima facie, we are satisfied with the case set up by the petitioner 1 Arshnoor Kaur," the bench noted while reserving its verdict.

The top court went on, "Accordingly, we direct the respondents to initiate whatever action is required for the purpose of her induction in the next available training course for appointment as Judge Advocate General (JAG)".

The bench referred to a newspaper article that a woman fighter pilot would be flying Rafale aircraft and said in such a scenario she could be taken as a prisoner of war.

"If it's permissible in the Indian Air Force for a lady to fly a Rafale fighter jet, then why



is it so difficult for the Army to allow more women in JAG?" Justice Datta asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, who was appearing for the Centre and the Army. The bench was informed that the second petitioner Tyagi joined the Indian Navy during the pendency of the proceedings.

The top court then questioned the Centre for earmarking fewer posts for women despite claiming the posts to be gender neutral. Bhati submitted the induction and employment of women officers in the Army including JAG branch was a progressive process keeping in view its operational preparedness.

"To say the policy of intake of men and women officers from 2012 to 2023 in the ratio of 70:30 (or now being 50:50) as discriminatory and volatile of fundamental rights would not only be incorrect but will also transgress into domain of executive which is the only competent and sole authority for deciding the intake of men and women officers in Indian Army," she said.

The top court further asked why the posts were termed gender-neutral when women candidates with higher merit were not qualified owing to the vacancies still being bifurcated on gender.

SHORT TAKES

Expired food found at Railways' Kerala caterer

Kochi: Stale and expired food materials were found Wednesday at one of the caterers supplying food to the Railways, prompting it to penalise the catering firm by slapping it with a fine of ₹one lakh. The Railways said the caterer was fined for lapses in cleanliness standards and the IRCTC was advised to take stringent action against it. The action followed news reports of stale and expired food material being found at the catering unit - Brindavan Food Products - contracted by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Railways near Ernakulam station.

NCP keeps political merger pot boiling

Mumbai: The Ajit Pawar-led NCP Wednesday said it was not averse to discussing a proposal of merger, if it were to be moved by the NCP (SP) faction, even though it rejected the current speculation on the likely reunion as media guesswork. For its part, the NCP (SP) camp shrugged off the merger rumours, fuelled by Sharad Pawar a few days back when he reportedly suggested that the party working president, Supriya Sule, and (NCP chief) Ajit Pawar will decide on the issue.

Two more held for 'anti-India' activities

Guwahati: Two more persons have been apprehended in Assam for "anti-India" activities on social media, taking the total number of such arrests to 60 so far in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Wednesday. The police arrested Sahin Ahmed Mazumdar from Hailakandi and Intesab Ahmed Laskar from Cachar district, the chief minister posted on X. "Crackdown down on Anti-nationals continue. Based on their anti-India activities on social media, @assampolice has picked up two people," Sarma posted.

Constable held

Kolkata: A Kolkata Police constable was Wednesday arrested for his alleged involvement in the loot of ₹2.66 crore from two employees of a private firm while they were travelling in a taxi in Entally area here, an officer said. The robbery took place May 5 around 11.45 am when the two employees of a private foreign exchange company took a taxi from S N Banerjee Road to deposit the money in a state-run bank in the Park Circus area.

COURT CORNER

SC to hear pleas against amended Waqf law today

New Delhi: The Supreme Court would Thursday hear pleas against the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025. The matter would be heard by Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih. Former CJI Sanjiv Khanna, whose bench was hearing the matter, demitted office May 13. On April 17, the top court recorded the Centre's assurance of not denotifying waqf properties, including "waqf by user", or making appointments in the central waqf council and boards till May 5. The assurance came when the apex court was informed that the law was passed by Parliament with "due deliberations" and it should not be stayed without hearing the government. The Centre opposed the apex court's proposal to pass an interim order against the denotification of waqf properties, including "waqf by user", aside from staying a provision allowing the inclusion of non-Muslims in the central waqf councils and boards.

SC directs states, UTs to frame guidelines for pedestrian walkways

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday directed all states and union territories to frame guidelines to ensure proper footpaths for pedestrians calling it their constitutional right. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan observed in the absence of footpaths pedestrians were forced to walk on roads, making them vulnerable to risks and accidents. "It is necessary to have proper footpaths for citizens. They should be such that they should be accessible for persons with disabilities and removal of encroachments is mandatory. This court has recognised that the right of pedestrians to use footpaths is guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," it said. The top court added, "Right to have footpaths which are unobstructed is certainly an essential characteristic."

SC refuses urgent listing of plea for FIR against Yashwant Varma

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday refused to list for urgent hearing a plea seeking the registration of an FIR against the Allahabad High Court's Justice Yashwant Varma in connection with the cash discovery row. A bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih asked lawyer and petitioner Mathews Nedumpara to follow the mentioning procedure. "Please go through the mentioning procedure," the CJI said. Former CJI Sanjiv Khanna had said no to oral mentioning for urgent listing and hearing of cases and said that the lawyers or the litigants will have to write an email and move the apex court registry first. After an in-house inquiry panel indicted the judge, the former CJI had nudged Justice Varma to resign. The ex-CJI wrote to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi after Justice Varma refused to resign.

New CJI Justice Gavai has delivered many a landmark verdict

Elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court May 24, 2019, Justice Gavai was part of constitution benches that delivered path-breaking verdicts, including on Article 370, electoral bonds and demonetisation of ₹1,000 and ₹500 currency notes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, sworn in as India's 52nd Chief Justice May 14, 2025, by President Droupadi Murmu, marks a historic milestone as the country's first Buddhist and second Dalit Chief Justice after K G Balakrishnan. His six-month tenure will end November 23, 2025.

Born November 24, 1960, in Amravati, Maharashtra, Justice Gavai hails from humble beginnings. He is the son of R S Gavai, founder of the Republican Party of India (Gavai) and a veteran politician. He began

his legal career in 1985, rising through the ranks as standing counsel and later a public prosecutor before being elevated as a Bombay High Court judge in 2003. He became a Supreme Court judge May 24, 2019.

Justice Gavai has penned about 300 judgments and was part of nearly 700 benches covering constitutional, civil, criminal, commercial, environmental, and administrative law. He has played a significant role in key constitution bench verdicts on Article 370, electoral bonds, and demonetisation.

He was part of the five-judge bench that upheld the abrogation of Article 370 and annulled



the Centre's electoral bonds scheme. He also backed the Centre's 2016 demonetisation move in a 4:1 majority verdict and joined a seven-judge bench

allowing sub-classification within Scheduled Castes for targeted reservation benefits.

Justice Gavai has taken firm stands on issues of liberty and

judicial integrity. He led the bench that stayed an Allahabad High Court observation trialising an attempt to rape, calling it "inhuman." He also delivered a landmark ruling against "bulldozer justice," laying down pan-India demolition guidelines requiring prior notice and a 15-day response period.

Known for his environmental concern, he has passed several significant orders for the protection of forests and wildlife. His judgments emphasize the protection of fundamental rights and the supremacy of the Constitution. Ahead of taking office, Justice Gavai stated he would not accept any post-re-

irement assignments. As CJI, he faces the daunting challenge of clearing over 81,000 pending cases in the Supreme Court and addressing court vacancies. He is also expected to handle critical matters, including the constitutionality of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Justice Gavai has lectured at premier institutions including Harvard and Columbia Universities, reflecting his academic and global engagement. His elevation follows the recommendation of outgoing CJI Sanjiv Khanna, with the law ministry confirming his appointment April 29.



A participant during a bullock cart race, at Padoniya village in Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

Bihar: Woman poisons her 4 kids; 3 die

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aurangabad (Bihar), May 14: A 40-year-old woman in Bihar's Aurangabad district Wednesday allegedly poisoned her four children, before attempting suicide, leading to the death of her three daughters, officials said. The woman and her six-year-old son are in a critical condition.

The deceased have been identified as Suryamani Kumari (five), Radha Kumari (three) and Shivani Kumari (one).

The woman, identified as Sonia Devi, and her son Ritesh Kumar (six) are battling for their lives at a government hospital in Aurangabad. The incident took place at Rafiganj railway station in Aurangab-

ad. Speaking to reporters, RPF inspector Ram Sumer said, "In the morning, we received information that a woman and her children were lying unconscious at the Rafiganj railway station." Railway police, along with local police and officials reached the spot, and found the woman and her four children in a critical condition.

OPERATION SINDOOR

Pak reels from heavy losses

According to reports, dozens of Pakistani fighter jets, including JF-17s and F-16s, have been destroyed. The strikes also claimed the lives of over 30-40 Pakistani military personnel, with 50 casualties reported at the Bholari airbase alone, including Squadron Leader Usman Yusuf and four airmen

As the dust settles from India's bold 'Operation Sindoor', launched May 7, the true scale of devastation inflicted on Pakistan's military infrastructure is beginning to emerge. Top sources confirm that 20% of the Pakistan Air Force's infrastructure has been decimated in the strikes, with significant damage to its fleet and facilities.

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What triggered Operation Sindoor
The operation was India's measured yet forceful response to the Pahalgam terror attack, widely believed to be orchestrated with Pakistani support. Despite India's focus on terror hubs in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), the Pakistani military reacted by launching drones and missiles toward Indian territory, attempting to target military and civilian structures.

In retaliation, the Indian Armed Forces launched aggressive, high-precision strikes on at least 10-11 airbases across Pakistan, including critical installations in Sargodha, Bholari, Nur Khan (Chaklala), Rafiqui (Shorkot), Murid (Chakwal),



Defence stocks surge over ₹86K-cr in market value
MUMBAI: The Indian defence sector has witnessed a sharp rise in its market capitalisation, gaining an impressive ₹ 86,211 crore since the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 lives. The bull rally began after the Indian armed forces launched 'Operation Sindoor,' a major precision strike on terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). This operation, India's largest tri-service action since the 1971 war, significantly boosted the confidence in defence stocks. Despite the heightened geopolitical tensions, shares of defence companies surged.

Sukkur, Sialkot, Pasrur, Chuni-an, Skardu, and Jacobabad. **Satellite evidence and confirmed damage**
High-resolution satellite images have since confirmed extensive structural damage across several key airbases, including those in Jacobabad, Sukkur, Rahim Yar Khan, Nur Khan, Mushaf (Sargodha), and Bholari. Craters on runways, shattered hangars, and destroyed ammunition depots are visible, offering stark vi-

sual proof of the operation's effectiveness. Pakistan's official statement acknowledged 11 military deaths and over 70 injuries, though Indian sources maintain that 35-40 Pakistani soldiers were killed in the four-day operation. **Strategic gains for India**
'Operation Sindoor' marks a turning point in India's counter-terrorism doctrine. Prime Minister Narendra Modi as-

serted that the operation represents a new normal—any future provocation from Pakistan will invite stronger retaliation. **Among its major successes, India:**

- Eliminated nine key terror launchpads tied to Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Hizbul Mujahideen.
- Struck deep into Pakistan's interior, including strategic towns like Bahawalpur and Mudri, long suspected to harbor terrorist infrastructure.
- Exposed significant weaknesses in Pakistan's air defence, which Indian jets either bypassed or neutralised during the 23-minute operation.
- Proved the resilience and readiness of India's air defence systems, which successfully countered Pakistan's retaliatory drone and missile attacks.

A global shift in perception
Unlike in past episodes, where India faced international calls for restraint, global powers this time largely supported India's right to self-defence. This reflects a growing recognition of India's firm stance against cross-border terrorism. Operation Sindoor has also helped reframe the Kashmir discourse. For the first time, the issue was de-hyphenated from terrorism. PM Modi declared that any talks with Pakistan would only focus on terrorism and the return of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). **AGENCIES**

Trade ties with Turkiye, Azerbaijan under strain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: India's trade relations with Turkiye and Azerbaijan are expected to come under strain due to Ankara and Baku backing Islamabad and condemning India's recent strikes on terror camps in Pakistan.

Following their support to Pakistan, calls for boycotting Turkish goods and tourism have surfaced across the country, with online travel platforms like EaseMyTrip and Ixigo issuing advisories against visiting these nations. Here are a few questions and answers (Q&A) explaining the impact of these developments on India's trade ties with Turkiye and Azerbaijan.

Q: Why India's ties with Turkiye and Azerbaijan may come under strain?

A: The two countries have criticised India's strike on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. Islamabad has also used Turkish drones in the conflict.

Q: What kind of trade does India have with Turkiye and Azerbaijan?

A: India's exports to Turkiye stood at USD 5.2 billion during April-February 2024-25 as against USD 6.65 billion in 2023-24. It accounts for only about 1.5 per cent of India's total exports of USD 437 billion. India's exports to Azerbaijan stood at only USD 86.07 million during April-February 2024-25 as against USD 89.67 million in 2023-24. It



accounts for a meagre 0.02 per cent of India's total outbound shipments. India's imports from Turkiye during April-February 2024-25 as against USD 3.78 billion in 2023-24. It accounts for only about 0.5 per cent of India's total imports of USD 720 billion. Imports from Azerbaijan were USD 1.93 million during April-February 2024-25 as against USD 0.74 million in 2023-24. It accounts for a meagre 0.0002 per cent of India's total inbound shipments. India has a trade surplus with both nations.

Q: What are the major products traded between these countries?

A: India's exports to Turkiye include: mineral fuels and oil (USD 960 million in 2023-24), electrical machinery and equipment, auto and its parts, organic chemicals, pharma products, tanning and dyeing items, plastic,

rubber, cotton, man-made fibres and filaments, iron and steel. **IMPORTS:** Different types of marbles (blocks and slabs), fresh apples (about USD 10 million), gold, vegetables, lime and cement; mineral oil (USD 1.81 billion in 2023-24); chemicals; natural or cultured pearls; iron and steel.

A bilateral trade agreement was signed in 1973, followed by a pact on setting up an India-Turkiye Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Co-operation in 1983.

India's exports to Azerbaijan: tobacco and its products (USD 28.67 million in 2023-24); tea, coffee, cereals, chemicals, plastic, rubber, paper and paper board, and ceramic products.

Imports include Animal fodder, organic chemicals, essential oils and perfumery, and raw hides and skins and leather (USD 1.52 million during April-February 2024-25). In 2023, India was the third-largest destination for Azerbaijan's crude oil.

Modi chairs Cabinet Security panel meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security, the first since the halt in the India-Pakistan military standoff, and is learnt to have discussed the security situation in the wake of the pause on Operation Sindoor.

He was joined by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah in the meeting, where they discussed the current situation and India's preparedness. The Prime Minister later chaired a meeting of the Union Cabinet.

Asked about ministers lauding the prime minister during the cabinet meeting, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "Operation Sindoor was an example of India's pride, the role of armed forces and the decisive leadership, besides the new doctrine. This is very commendable for the country." In his first address to the nation after Operation Sindoor Monday, Prime Minister

Op Sindoor still underway: BJP

NEW DELHI: Slamming the Congress and other opposition parties, the BJP Wednesday asserted that Operation Sindoor is still going on and it has been stopped only temporarily, asking them to refrain from raising "unnecessary and unwanted" questions on the issue. Talking to reporters, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said the government has not used the word "ceasefire" anywhere and clearly stated that the solution to the issue of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) can be resolved through bilateral talk between India and Pakistan.

Narendra Modi sternly warned Pakistan that India will not succumb to nuclear blackmail and sent a clear message to the world: terror and trade, terror and talks cannot go together.

"Operation Sindoor is India's new policy against terrorism and our unwavering pledge for justice. It is the new normal. We have only kept in abeyance our operations against Pakistan and the future will depend on their behaviour," Modi said in the 22-minute address.



People take part in a 'Tiranga Yatra' in solidarity with Indian armed forces, in Shimla



BSF jawan Purnam Kumar Shaw's wife and mother react as they express their relief after his release from Pakistan's custody



Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C), South Western Air Command (SWAC), Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor during a visit to forward airfields in Gujarat

AIRSPACE TO CYBERSPACE

India battled drone swarms, misinformation during conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: During a four-day intense military confrontation, the Indian armed forces neutralised swarms of Pakistani drones and countered a coordinated campaign of cyberattacks and misinformation, underscoring the evolving nature of modern warfare.

Ahead of India's precision strikes under Operation Sindoor May 7, targeting nine terror camps in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and Pakistan, multiple Indian websites came under cyberattack. The digital offensive began shortly after the April Pahalgam terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir. The website of the Army Nursing College in Jalandhar was hacked and defaced with inflammatory content. At least four Army Public Schools, including APS Nagrota and APS Sunjuwan, were also targeted by hackers.

In tandem with these intrusions, a wave of misinformation



was unleashed across social media platforms, intensifying post-Operation Sindoor and amid Pakistan's military retaliation. False claims were made to discredit the Indian armed forces, including attempts to portray India as the aggressor against its own cities. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri dismissed these claims as "preposterous," citing a false narrative

about Indian forces allegedly attacking cities like Amritsar and even the Nankana Sahib Gurdwara. "That we would attack our own cities is the kind of deranged fantasy that only the Pakistani State can come up with," he said during a press briefing May 9.

On May 8 at 8 p.m., multiple Pakistani unmanned aerial systems targeted Indian Air

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Force (IAF) bases in Jammu, Udhampur, Pathankot, Amritsar, Bathinda, Nal, Dalhousie, Thoise, Jaisalmer, Uttarlai, Phalodi, and Naliya. The drone assaults came in waves but were intercepted and neutralised by India's well-prepared air defence systems, including the Barak-8, S-400 Triumph, Akash missiles, and indigenous anti-drone technology. "All these waves were neutralised by our trained crew. There was no damage on the ground," confirmed Air Marshal AK Bharti May 11.

Simultaneously, Indian cyber

teams and intelligence units worked around the clock to dismantle the misinformation network. The Press Information Bureau's Fact Check Unit debunked several fake claims, such as the alleged removal of Northern Command chief Lt Gen MV Suchindra Kumar after the Pahalgam attack.

Defence analysts highlighted how information warfare has become integral to modern conflict. "Even false information can serve as a weapon to demoralise the adversary," noted an expert from the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence

Studies and Analyses.

As attacks escalated online, India enhanced its cybersecurity posture. Defence sources confirmed that appropriate measures were taken to strengthen digital defences and improve the resilience of online platforms against further incursions. Agencies continue to actively monitor cyberspace, especially for threats with alleged cross-border links.

The Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff declared the success of Operation Sindoor as a milestone in India-Pakistan relations, demonstrating military dominance and technological prowess across both kinetic and non-kinetic domains—including space, cyber, and electronic warfare.

Though both sides have since agreed to cease hostilities, Indian forces remain on high alert. With vigilance in both airspace and cyberspace, India has signalled its preparedness for any future misadventure.

India had 'clear edge' in strikes on Pakistan military facilities: NYT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, May 14: India appears to have had a "clear edge" in targeting Pakistan's military facilities and airfields during the recent four-day confrontation, the New York Times reported, citing satellite images. High-resolution satellite imagery, from before and after the strikes, shows "clear damage" to Pakistan's facilities by Indian attacks, according to the report.

"The four-day military clash between India and Pakistan was the most expansive fighting in half a century between the two nuclear-armed countries. As both sides used drones and missiles to test each other's air defences and hit military facilities, they claimed to inflict severe damage," the report said. It added that satellite imagery indicates that while the attacks were widespread, the damage was far more contained than claimed — "and appeared mostly inflicted by India on Pakistani facilities."

In the new age of high-tech warfare, the report said that strikes by both sides, verified by the imagery, appeared to be precisely targeted. "Where India appears to have had a clear edge is in its targeting of Pakistan's military facilities and airfields, as the latter stretch of fighting shifted from symbolic strikes and shows of force to attacks on each other's defence capabilities," the report said.

At Bholari air base, located less than 100 miles from the Pakistani port city of Karachi, India's defence officials said they had struck an aircraft hangar with a precision attack.

Further, the Nur Khan air base, within a roughly 15-mile range of both the Pakistani Army's headquarters and the office of the country's prime minister and a short distance from the unit that oversees and protects Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, was "perhaps the most sensitive military target that India struck."

The Indian military said it had particularly targeted the runways and other facilities at some of Pakistan's key air bases and "satellite images showed the damage", the report said, noting that May 10, Pakistan issued a notice for the Rahim Yar Khan air base saying that the runway was not operational.



Canadians elected this new government with a strong mandate to define a new economic and security relationship with the United States and to build a stronger economy for all Canadians

40 CLIMBERS SUMMIT MT EVEREST IN SINGLE DAY

Forty climbers scaled the world's highest peak Mt Everest Wednesday, according to expedition organisers. Those who summited the 8849-metre peak included people from Nepal as well as foreigners



of the day quote

As the first African nation to lead this bloc, we remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing a world grounded in solidarity, equality, and sustainability, albeit in a volatile and polarised geopolitical climate

RONALD LAMOLA | FOREIGN MINISTER, SOUTH AFRICA

I ask you to reflect — for a moment — on what action we will tell future generations we each took to stop the 21st century atrocity to which we bear daily witness in Gaza

TOM FLETCHER | HEAD OF THE UN OFFICE

The AI technology would be used to monitor driver fatigue and to prevent the drivers from falling asleep

BIMAL RATHNAYAKA | TRANSPORT MINISTER, SRILANKA

SHORT TAKES

Indian-origin student dies in Bahamas

New York: An Indian-origin college student from the US died in the Bahamas after accidentally falling from a hotel balcony just days before he was set to graduate. Gaurav Jaisingh was a student at Bentley University, Waltham, Massachusetts and was in the Bahamas for an annual senior class trip when he died in the accident Sunday. Jaisingh was set to graduate later this week. Bentley University said in a post on X that "it's been a difficult few days and our community is feeling the emotional toll of the tragic loss of Gaurav Jaisingh '25. Our hearts go out to Gaurav's family and friends. We plan to honour Gaurav at the undergraduate commencement ceremony," scheduled for May 17.

Russia jails election watchdog head

London: The head of Russia's only independent election watchdog was sentenced Wednesday to five years in a penal colony after being found guilty of working with an "undesirable organization". Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of the Golos movement, was arrested in August 2023. He pleaded not guilty at his trial. Human rights campaigners say the case against the 44-year-old is part of a wider crackdown on civil society that has intensified since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Canada PM slams UK Trump invite

London: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has criticised Britain's invitation to Donald Trump for a second state visit, saying it undermined his government's effort to project a united front against the US president's talk of annexing Canada. Since taking office in January, Trump has repeatedly said he wants Canada to become the 51st US state, a suggestion that has angered Canadians and left Britain trying to tread a fine line between the two North American countries.

Fire breaks out at chemicals warehouse

Alcala De Guadaira: A fire broke out Wednesday at a warehouse for chemical product distribution near Seville in southern Spain, sending a plume of dark smoke billowing from the site as authorities asked residents to remain indoors. A spokesperson for the regional emergency services told Reuters they had received hundreds of calls - starting at around 1:20 pm - alerting them to the fire at the La Red industrial park.

IMF disburses \$1.02bn to Pak

The disbursement of the second tranche comes on a day when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is holding virtual discussions on Pakistan's upcoming budget as the visit of its mission to Islamabad was delayed due to security concerns in the region

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi/Islamabad, May 14: The International Monetary Fund has disbursed a second tranche of \$1.023 billion under the Extended Fund Facility programme for Pakistan, the central bank said Wednesday.

The disbursement of the second tranche comes on a day when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is holding virtual discussions on Pakistan's upcoming budget as the visit of its mission to Islamabad was delayed due to security concerns in the region.

With the transfer, the total disbursements stand at approximately \$2.1 billion under the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of \$7 billion, which was signed between Pakistan and the global lender last year.

The federal government is planning to unveil the budget for fiscal 2025-26 June 2. The IMF talks will continue until May 16.

The Central bank said the second tranche amount would be reflected in its foreign exchange reserves for the week ending May 16.

The amount was approved last week by the IMF board under the ongoing Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and allowed an additional arrangement for the \$1.4 billion Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF).

The RSF is intended to support countries facing climate vulnerabilities and natural di-



B'desh to receive \$1.3bn from IMF

DHAKA: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is set to release \$1.3 billion to Bangladesh in June, after completing a fourth review of its \$4.7-billion loan programme and a key breakthrough in talks on exchange rate reforms, the finance ministry said. The funds, covering both the fourth and fifth tranches, had been held up as the IMF pressed for greater exchange rate flexibility, particularly the adoption of a crawling peg mechanism. The fourth review in Dhaka in April was followed by further discussions during the Bank-Fund Spring Meetings in Washington DC that month, focused on critical reforms in revenue management, fiscal policy, and the foreign exchange regime. "After carefully reviewing all the issues ... both parties have agreed on the revenue management, currency exchange rate and other reform frameworks," the finance ministry said in a statement Wednesday. With completion of a staff-level agreement on the fourth review, the IMF is expected to release \$1.3 billion set for the fourth and fifth installments together by June, it added.

sasters by strengthening long-term macroeconomic stability and resilience.

Pakistan is heavily dependent on the IMF bailout package which helped to shore up its dwindling reserves. The country got backing of the fund at a critical time last year when it was on the verge of bankruptcy and was saved by the lender by providing \$3 billion on a short term basis.

According to the details on the IMF website, Pakistan has received at least 25 bailout loans since becoming members of the fund. Interestingly, different governments announced to say goodbye to the IMF but so far failed to fulfil the promise.

The decision to release the funds came after the IMF expressed satisfaction on the first review of Pakistan's economic reform programme supported by the EFF Arrangement, the bank said.

Kim supervises special operations' drills

Seoul, May 14: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has supervised combined tactical drills of special operations, stressing that the most "crucial" task for the North's armed forces is to make full preparations for war, state media reported Wednesday. The combined tactical drills of special operations and tank subunits' joint fire strike demonstration took place the previous day, Yonhap news agency reported quoting the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). "Saying that our revolutionary armed forces are now in charge of not a few fronts, but the most important among them is the anti-imperialist class front and making full preparations for war is the most crucial task," Kim was quoted as saying by the KCNA.

Indian heritage Anita Anand becomes Canada's foreign min

OTTAWA: Indo-Canadians Anita Anand and Maninder Sidhu have landed important portfolios in the new cabinet announced by Prime Minister Mark Carney after reshuffle. While Anand was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sidhu is the new Minister for International Trade in the new cabinet announced Tuesday. Carney announced the reshuffle almost two weeks after his Liberal Party won the federal elections in Canada. He had replaced Justin Trudeau months ahead of the elections. Anand, 58, was the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry before the polls and in the past has served in the roles including of defence minister. She replaced Melanie Joly, who is now the Minister of Industry.

Japan grounds military training jets after crash leaves 2 missing

Tokyo: Japan grounded most of its aging military training aircraft Wednesday after one of the planes crashed minutes after take off. Two crew are missing after the T-4 training aircraft operated by the Japan Air Self-Defence Force crashed after taking off from Komaki Air Base, in the central Japanese prefecture of Aichi, officials said. The force said the plane was lost from radar two minutes after departure. The authorities are searching for the missing aircraft and its crew in an area near a reservoir known as the Iruka pond, officials said. The reservoir, in the city of Inuyama, is about 10 kilometres northeast of the air base. The military has grounded temporarily nearly 200 T-4s until the cause of the accident is identified and safety checks and training are carried out, Hiroaki Uchikura, the air force chief of staff, told a news conference late Wednesday. The crashed plane was a 36-year-old T-4 operated out of Nyutabaru Air Base, in the southern prefecture of Miyazaki. It was not fitted with a voice recorder or a flight data recorder.

Israel intensifies Gaza bombardment



REUTERS

Cairo, May 14: Israeli military strikes killed at least 70 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip Wednesday, local health authorities said, in an intensification of the bombardment as US President Donald Trump visits the Middle East.

Medics said most of the dead, including women and children, were killed in a barrage of Israeli airstrikes on houses in the Jabalia area of northern Gaza. "Some victims are still on the road and under the rubble where rescue and civil emergency teams can't reach (them)," the health ministry statement said.

Israel's military had no immediate comment. It said it was trying to verify the reports.

Reuters television footage showed residents returning to

the ruins of their homes. Some sifted through the remains of walls and furniture, looking for documents and belongings.

"They fired two rockets, they told us the house of Moqbel (had been hit)," said Hadi Moqbel, who lost relatives in the attack in Jabalia. "We came running, we saw body parts on the ground, children killed, the woman killed and a baby killed - his head was exploded like a flower. He was two months old."

Israeli press reports Wednesday cited security officials as saying they believed Hamas military leader Mohammad Sinwar and other senior officials had been killed in a strike Tuesday on what the Israeli military described as a command and control bunker under the European Hospital in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.

Balochs declare 'Balochistan is not Pakistan'

PAANK - THE BALOCH NATIONAL MOVEMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS DEPARTMENT - HAS ALSO STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE CONTINUING POLICY OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES CARRIED OUT BY PAKISTANI SECURITY FORCES AND INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES IN BALOCHISTAN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Quetta, May 14: As several individuals continue to be forcibly disappeared across multiple districts of Balochistan province, several Baloch activists all over the world have renewed their call to pressurise Pakistan to immediately end its repressive policies in the province.

"Baloch people across Pakistan-occupied Balochistan (PoB) are up on streets and this is their national verdict that Balochistan is not Pakistan and world can't be a silent spectator anymore," Mir Yar Baloch, a Baloch human rights activist posted on X Wednesday afternoon.

Paank - the Baloch National Movement's Human Rights Department - has also strongly condemned the continuing policy of enforced disappearances carried out by Pakistani security forces and intelligence agencies in Balochistan.

Revealing a series of incidents between April and May, it stated that five more individuals were forcibly disappeared across multiple districts of Balochistan, reflecting a persistent climate of fear, impunity, and state repression in the province.



"On April 14, 2025, Shah Jan, son of Qadir Dad, a driver by profession and resident of Absar Bunday Kalat in Turbat, was forcibly disappeared by military intelligence operatives from the Yaqoob Mohla Absar area in Turbat city, Kech district. Ali Ahmed, son of Muhammad Rahim and a resident of Jebri Mashkai, Awaran district, was abducted from his

TRUMP MEETS SYRIAN PREZ



REUTERS

Doha, May 14: US President Donald Trump met with Syria's president in Saudi Arabia Wednesday and urged him to normalise ties with longtime foe Israel, after a surprise US announcement that it would lift all sanctions on the Islamist-led government.

Trump met Syria's Ahmed al-Sharaa, who once pledged allegiance to al Qaeda and swept to power at the head of a group that Washington has called a terrorist organisation, before a summit between the United States and Gulf Arab countries.

He urged Sharaa to join the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco, which normalised relations with Israel under the US-brokered Abraham Accords in 2020, the White House press secretary posted on X.

Trump said he thought Syria would join at some point, according to a Washington Post pool report.

"I think they have to get themselves straightened out. I told him, 'I hope you're going to join when it's straightened out.' He said, 'Yes.' But they have a lot of work to do," said Trump.

Photos posted on Saudi state television showed them shaking hands in the presence of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, also known as MbS.

Trump's Middle East trip has fuelled doubts in Israel about where the country stands in Washington's priorities.

The US exploring the possibility of normalising ties with Syria, one of Israel's biggest longstanding foes, and holding nuclear talks with its other en-

emy Iran has sidelined Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right allies in the government.

Israel considers Iran's nuclear program "an existential threat" and does not trust Syria's new Islamist president.

Despite concerns within sectors of his own administration over Syria's leaders' former ties to al Qaeda, Trump said Tuesday he would lift sanctions on Syria in a major policy shift.

Israeli remains deeply suspicious of Sharaa's administration and Israeli officials have continued to describe Sharaa as a jihadist, though he severed ties with al Qaeda in 2016. The Israeli prime minister's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump, who said his Gulf region trip does not sideline Israel, told reporters the fact he has relationships with countries in the Middle East is "very good for Israel".

He said the meeting with Sharaa, who he described as a young, attractive guy with a very strong past, was "great".

"He's got a real shot at holding it together," said Trump.

Sharaa was for years the leader of al Qaeda's official wing in the Syrian conflict.

He first joined the group in Iraq, where he spent five years in a US prison. The United States removed a \$10 million bounty on his head in December.

The US also hopes regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia will join the Abraham Accords, but discussions came to a halt after the Gaza war erupted and the kingdom insists there can be no normalisation without Palestinian statehood.

forces from his home May 11, 2025. Tahir Baloch, son of Allah Bakhsh from Dasht Hor Sholig, Kech district, was detained along with his vehicle by forces from the Gwadar district May 12, 2025," it further added.

The human rights body highlighted that these incidents reflect a broader and systemic policy of enforced disappearances that continues unabated in Balochistan.

"Victims are often taken without any legal procedure, warrant, or due process, and families are left in anguish with no information on their loved ones' whereabouts or well-being," it pointed out.

Paank also called on international human rights organisations, including the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the broader international community, to pressurise Pakistan to immediately release all forcibly disappeared persons and end its repressive policies in Balochistan.

"The practice of enforced disappearances must be recognised as a crime against humanity, and perpetrators must be held accountable under international law," the human rights agency stated.



Over 111 research projects have been funded with the sanction amount of ₹300 crore and India now ranks among the top six nations globally in 6G patent filings. We have a vast amount of talent pool and we have enough time. There is no reason for us not to lead in 6G

CHANDRA SEKHAR PEMMASANI | UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR TELECOM

VI TO ROLL OUT 5G SERVICES IN DELHI-NCR

Vodafone Idea (Vi) will roll out its 5G services in Delhi-NCR May 15 in all 17 priority regions where it has secured 5G spectrum, by August of this year. It's introductory 5G offer includes unlimited data for users with 5G-enabled devices on plans starting from ₹299, it added



of the day **QUOTE**

Gender equity in the workplace is not just a moral or social imperative, it is a strategic one. As India sets its sights on becoming a USD 8 trillion economy by 2035, fully integrating women into the formal workforce is developmentally foundational. Our research shows that while many organisations recognise the importance of diverse management and teams, progress remains uneven

VIVEK PANDIT | PARTNER, MCKINSEY & CO



We see that 90 per cent of our first-time guests from India are these young people. They are the ones adopting Airbnb. This is really a great sign for us that we're tapping into this huge population. It is our target audience, and we're seeing great traction with them

NATHAN BLECHARCZYK | CO-FOUNDER, AIRBNB



India's automotive and zero-emission manufacturing market offers immense potential for growth and innovation. Through our partnership with Sterling Tools, we are bringing our proven expertise in magnet-free motors to Indian customers across a wide range of vehicle categories

JAMES WIDMER | CEO, ADVANCED ELECTRIC MACHINES



SHORT TAKES

KPI Green Energy profit jumps

New Delhi: KPI Green Energy Wednesday said its net profit more than doubled to ₹104.18 crore in the quarter ended March 31, 2025, on account of higher revenues. The company had posted a net profit of ₹43.04 crore in the January-March period of the preceding 2023-24 financial years, the KP Group company said in a regulatory filing.

Tata Capital profit grows

New Delhi: Tata Capital Wednesday reported a 31 per cent yearly surge in its consolidated profit after tax (PAT) to ₹1,000 crore for three months ended March 2025. Total revenues from operations rose nearly 50 per cent to ₹7,478 crore in the January-March period of FY25, company said in a regulatory filing.

MMT posts profit

New Delhi: MakeMyTrip Wednesday reported a net profit of USD 29.2 million during March quarter. The company reported a net profit of USD 171.9 million in the January-March quarter of the previous financial year. Revenue as per IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards) grew 25.6 per cent yearly in constant currency to USD 245.5 million from USD 202.9 million.

Eicher Motors profit rises

New Delhi: Eicher Motors Wednesday reported 27 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at ₹1,362 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2025 riding on higher sales across markets. The company had posted a net profit of ₹1,070 crore for the January-March period of 2023-24. Total revenue from operations rose to ₹5,241 crore in the quarter as against ₹4,256 crore in the year-ago period, Eicher Motors said in a regulatory filing.

WPI inflation dips to 13-month low

Marginal decrease in WPI inflation generally seen positive, especially if it's driven by factors like increased supply or reduced demand rather than a decrease in economic activity. However, expert predicts more cut in future

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: Wholesale price inflation dropped to a 13-month low of 0.85 per cent in April with softening in prices of food articles, fuel and manufactured products, with experts projecting further easing in the data of next month, government data showed Wednesday. WPI-based inflation was 2.05 per cent in March. It was 1.19 per cent in April last year.

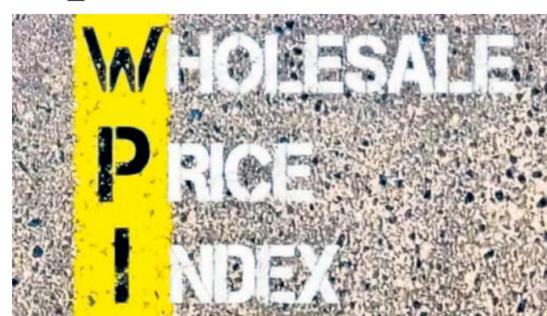
"Positive rate of inflation in April, 2025 is primarily due to an increase in prices of manufacture of food products, other

manufacturing, chemicals and chemical products, manufacture of other transport equipment and manufacture of machinery and equipment, etc," the industry ministry said in a statement.

As per the WPI (Wholesale price index) data, deflation in food, and fuel and power WPI, along with disinflation in manufactured products drove the moderation. Food articles saw a deflation of 0.86 per cent in April, against an inflation of 1.57 per cent in March. Deflation in vegetables was 18.26 per cent during April compared to deflation of 15.88 per cent in March.

In onion, inflation eased to 0.20 per cent in April, as against 26.65 per cent in March. Inflation in fruits softened to 8.38 per cent, from 20.78 per cent in the previous month. Potato and pulses saw a deflation of 24.30 per cent and 5.57 per cent, respectively.

"Favourable base effects to keep WPI inflation low in coming months," Barclays said in a research note.



Deflation in fuel and power was 2.18 per cent in April, compared to a 0.20 per cent inflation in March.

"Sharp sequential decline in prices of mineral oils such as kerosene (which was also reflected in consumer prices) and ATF and motor fuels, drove this fall," Barclays said.

Crude oil prices have generally remained in the USD 60-65/ barrel handle in April, with downward pressure arising from OPEC+ announcing production increases. OPEC+ is a group of 23 oil-producing

countries that work together to manage the supply of oil in the world market in order to influence global oil prices.

Manufactured products, however, saw inflation at 2.62 per cent in April, compared to 3.07 per cent in March.

ICRA Senior Economist Rahul Agrawal said the IMD's expectation of an early monsoon onset in Kerala and an above normal monsoon in the country is a positive for crop output, and consequently, the food inflation outlook, although the spatial and temporal distri-

tribution of the same remains key.

"We expect the WPI to average sub-2 per cent in FY2026, which, along with our CPI inflation and real GDP projections for the fiscal implies that nominal GDP growth may be capped at 9 per cent," Agrawal said.

Data released Tuesday showed retail inflation eased to a near 6-year low of 3.16 per cent in April mainly due to subdued prices of vegetables, fruits, pulses, and other protein-rich items.

Easing of inflation would create enough room for the Reserve Bank, which mainly takes into account retail inflation while formulating monetary policy, to go in for another round of rate cut in the June monetary policy review.

In April, the RBI cut the benchmark policy rate by 0.25 per cent to 6 per cent. This was the second cut during the year to stimulate the economy, facing the threat of US reciprocal tariffs. The RBI sees retail inflation averaging 4 per cent in the current fiscal from the previous estimate of 4.2 per cent.

Bookings for Azerbaijan, Turkey down: MMT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: Many Indians are boycotting travel plans to countries Turkey and Azerbaijan after the two nations took a stand with Pakistan after recent attack in Kashmir. Though the two nations are the most travel destination, but both have seen a major decline after Indo-Pakistan conflict. For a change, people are preferring nation over leisure as they are okay with cancellation charges as geopolitical tensions shape narratives.

With boycott calls for travel to Turkey and Azerbaijan trending on social media, Travel Company MakeMyTrip Wednesday said it has witnessed a decline in bookings to the two nations by 60 per cent in the last one week while cancellations have jumped 250 per cent. Calls for boycotting travel to Turkey and Azerbaijan have surfaced across the country in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor for their support to Pakistan. Indian travellers have expressed strong sentiments over the past one week. Various other travel companies like have also cancelled travel packages for these two countries.

In solidarity with our nation and out of deep respect for our armed forces, we strongly support this sentiment and advise all against all non-essential travel to Azerbaijan and Turkey, a MakeMyTrip spokesperson said.

Markets end higher as inflation cools to 6-year low in April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 14: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher Wednesday due to selective buying support amid easing inflation and positive global cues.

Besides, heavy rush on metal and industrial counters and unabated foreign capital inflows supported the positive trend in the equity markets, traders said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 182.34 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at 81,330.56. The gauge hit a high of 81,691.87 and a low of 80,910.03. As many as 2,857 stocks advanced while 1,121 declined and 147 remained unchanged on BSE.

The NSE Nifty rose 88.55 points or 0.36 per cent to 24,666.90.

"Markets were choppy in intra-day trade but managed to end in the green on selective buying support as investors don't want to rush into equities after Monday's strong optimism. While foreign fund flows in the domestic market will be critical going ahead, investors are worried that the US-China settling tariff disputes could revive foreign investors' interest in Chinese markets again," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Tata Steel emerged as the biggest winner, rising 3.88 per cent, followed by Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers.

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel climbed nearly 1 per cent after it posted about a five-fold jump in consolidated net profit to ₹11,022 crore in the March 2025 quarter, mainly due to the tariff hike impact and one-time gain on tax benefits.

However, Asian Paints, Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, NTPC, and Power Grid were among the laggards. Tata Motors dipped over 1 per cent after



Contributing factors include a consistent decline in inflation, rising disposable incomes, increased government spending, and falling interest rates. Meanwhile, a pause in global trade tensions is boosting sentiment in international markets, with metals gaining traction amid easing concerns over an economic slowdown

VINOD NAIR | RESEARCH HEAD, GEOJIT INVESTMENTS LTD

the firm reported a 51 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to ₹8,556 crore for the March quarter, hit by lower volumes and operating leverage.

"The session began on a positive note, supported by encouraging factors, such as easing retail inflation and stable global cues. However, the absence of sustained buying interest and a mixed performance among heavyweight stocks limited further gains as the day progressed," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE small cap gauge jumped 1.63 per cent and the midcap index climbed 1.19 per cent. Among sector indices, metal surged 2.46 per cent, industrials (1.73 per cent), realty (1.71 per cent), commodities (1.49 per cent), oil & gas (1.46 per cent), BSE focused IT (1.38 per cent)

"Nifty Metal was the top gainer, up 2.5 per cent, as easing trade tensions between the US and China lifted sentiment across metal stocks. Nifty IT also saw a 1.3 per cent uptick,

rebounding after profit booking in the previous session. Defence stocks continued to witness momentum, backed by strong domestic demand and export optimism," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Meanwhile, retail inflation eased to a nearly six-year low of 3.16 per cent in April, mainly due to subdued prices of vegetables, fruits, pulses, and other protein-rich items, creating enough room for the Reserve Bank to go for another round of rate cuts in the June monetary policy review.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation was 3.34 per cent in March and 4.83 per cent in April 2024. It was 3.15 per cent in July 2019.

Wholesale price inflation dropped to a 13-month low of 0.85 per cent in April, with softening in prices of food articles, fuel and manufactured products, with experts projecting further easing in the data for next month, government data showed Wednesday.

Cabinet sanctions HCL-Foxconn semiconductor joint venture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved ₹3,706 crore semiconductor plant at Jewar in Uttar Pradesh, to be set up by the HCL-Foxconn joint venture to manufacture display driver chips for mobile phones, laptops, and automobiles.

The plant will have the capacity to handle 20,000 wafers per month, and 3.6 crore chips will be produced per month, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said while briefing the media on the Cabinet decision. The minister also said that the plant will make driver chips for displays used in mobile phones, laptops, automobiles, and other devices.

"The Cabinet has approved a sixth semiconductor plant that will be set up in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh. It is a joint venture between HCL and Foxconn to manufacture display driver chips. These chips control the quality and format of the content displayed on screen. It is a very advanced technology that is being set up," Vaishnaw said.

Foxconn is the biggest manufacturer of electronic products, including Apple's iPhone.

"What we understand is that once this unit is there, then the display panel plant will also come to India. This will meet 40 per cent of India's capacity. It is a large plant. It will also meet the requirements of Foxconn for the rest of the world," Vaishnaw said.

These chips control the

function and format of content on the screen of devices. The HCL-Foxconn JV will become operational in 2027, the minister said.

The plant is expected to create employment for 2,000 people, he noted. The electronics manufacturing industry in India, at present, employs around 25 lakh people.

"Semiconductors are basic components. It will have a multiplier effect on the entire electronics manufacturing in the country," Vaishnaw said.

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"Semiconductors are basic components. It will have a multiplier effect on the entire electronics manufacturing in the country," Vaishnaw said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his thoughts and wishes on HCL-Foxconn JV Wednesday. He posted on X (social media platform, formerly Twitter) said, "India's strides in the world of semiconductors continue! Today's Cabinet decision regarding the establishment of a semiconductor unit in Uttar Pradesh will boost growth and innovation. It will create innumerable opportunities for the youth as well."

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Indian cos commit nearly \$6mn in Azerbaijan, Turkey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: Four Indian entities committed foreign direct investments worth nearly \$6 million in Azerbaijan and Turkey, accounting for a small part of the total \$6.8 billion overseas investments proposed by Indian companies in April, according to the latest Reserve Bank data.

Among the investments, two Indian entities - Omega plasto ltd and Rama pure water pvt ltd have committed equity investments in the 'wholesale, retail trade, restaurants and hotels' segment in Turkey via joint ventures, as per RBI data.

Axiro semiconductor pvt ltd has committed funds in Turkey's manufacturing space through a wholly-owned subsidiary. Together, the three entities' total commitment is around \$0.28 million. The data showed that Project Aslan has committed an amount of \$5.6 million in Azerbaijan's agriculture and mining sectors.

On the contrary, companies like Tata communications ltd has committed \$1.12 billion, including a guarantee of little over \$1 billion and equity of \$88.77 million, in the Netherlands. JSW Neo Energy's financial commitment stood at \$720.6 million through its



wholly-owned subsidiary O2 Power Midco Holdings PTE in Singapore towards electricity, gas and water. It has also committed \$60 million through

The Indian Chamber of Commerce joins these organisations in demanding a boycott of states like Turkey and Azerbaijan, following their stand against India's response to terrorism

SUBHASH GOYAL | CHAIRMAN, TOURISM COMMITTEE, ICC

insurance and business services through a joint venture with LIC Lanka in Sri Lanka.

Against the backdrop of Turkey and Azerbaijan condemning India's recent strikes on terror camps in Pakistan, New Delhi's trade relations with Ankara and Baku might come under strain. There are calls for a boycott of Turkish goods and tourism from certain quarters.

It is to be noted that, the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) supported the boycott calls. Several tourism associations and industry bodies have issued statements of solidarity and collective commitment to

wards prioritising our national interest over commercial goals. The Indian Chamber of Commerce joins these organisations in demanding a boycott of states like Turkey and Azerbaijan, following their stand against India's response to terrorism, said Subhash Goyal, Chairman, Tourism Committee, ICC.

As one of India's oldest chambers of commerce, Goyal said ICC remains committed to promoting ethical, responsible, and respectful business and tourism practices while upholding the values of integrity, security, and unity of our country.

IPL revises replacement rules

THE DECISION WAS TAKEN CONSIDERING NON-AVAILABILITY OF A FEW FOREIGN PLAYERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: The Indian Premier League Wednesday allowed teams to make temporary replacements in their squad for the remainder of the tournament considering the non-availability of a few foreign players owing to the forced rescheduling of the event.

IPL had to be suspended last week due to the India-Pakistan military conflict but the announcement of the ceasefire paved the way for its resumption May 17.

As per the original schedule, the IPL final was to be held May 25 but now it will take place June 3, making it trickier for the players who had to report for national duty.

While a few players are not returning due to personal reasons, the likes of Jamie Overton, representing CSK this season, will stay back in the UK for the white-ball series against the West Indies at home.

In an email to franchises which was accessed by PTI, IPL informed the teams of the temporary replacement player option. "... in the current situation, where we had to temporarily suspend IPL 2025, resulting in its completion beyond the earlier set-out date of May 25, 2025, we have reassessed the Replacement Player provisions.

"Given the non-availability of certain foreign players due to national commitments or personal reasons or any injury or illness, Temporary Replacement Players will be allowed until the conclusion of this tournament.

"This decision is subject to the condition that the Temporary Replacement players taken from this point forward will not be eligible for retention in the following year," IPL said in its note.

As per the IPL Player Regu-



As per the original schedule, the IPL final was to be held May 25 but now it will take place June 3, making it trickier for the players who had to report for national duty

Currently, GT, RCB, MI, PBKS, DC and LSG are in contention for an IPL playoff spot

lations 2025-27, players can be replaced if they are injured or ill, provided the injury or illness occurs during or before the 12th league match of the relevant team in that season.

"Temporary Replacement players will have to register for the IPL Player Auction 2026. The replacements which were approved or taken before the suspended period will be eligible for retention ahead of 2026 player auction," the note added.

The rescheduling is likely to impact the preparation of South Africa and Australia for the World Test Championship final beginning at Lord's June 11.

WTC Final-bound SA players may miss IPL

Johannesburg: South African players who have been picked for the World Test Championship Final against Australia are likely to miss the IPL playoffs as the country's cricket board is standing firm on prioritising national duty over league commitments. The BCCI confirmed Monday that the IPL will resume May 17 with the final slated for June 3. However, the revised schedule has left players from WTC finalists Australia and South Africa in a tight spot. The franchises and the BCCI have urged foreign boards to make their players available for the remainder of the tournament. CSA, however, has reiterated its commitment to WTC Final preparations. "It is an individual decision, obviously, to return or to play or continue," CSA's director of national teams and high performance Enoch Nkwe said during press conference. "One thing we've made clear, and we are finalising this with the IPL and the BCCI, is sticking to our original plan when it comes to the WTC preparations." "May 26 is the latest for the Test guys to come back. The original plans don't change because the No 1 priority is the WTC final. We've been engaging with them over the last day or two to make sure we're all on the same page," he added. Eight South African players -- Kagiso Rabada (Gujarat Titans), Lungi Ngidi (Royal Challengers Bengaluru), Tristan Stubbs (Delhi Capitals), Aiden Markram (Lucknow Super Giants), Ryan Rickelton (Mumbai Indians), Corbin Bosch (MI), Marco Jansen (Punjab Kings) and Wiaan Mulder (Sunrisers Hyderabad) -- have been named in the Proteas squad for the WTC Final, scheduled to start from June 11 in London.



DC sign Mustafizur as Jake-Fraser's replacement



New Delhi: Delhi Capitals Wednesday signed Bangladesh left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman as replacement for Australian batter Jake-Fraser McGurk, who will not rejoin the team for the remainder of Indian Premier League after returning home due to the ongoing India-Pakistan hostilities. Fraser-McGurk's release won't hurt DC as he was dropped after the first six games in which he tallied only 55 runs. Also, if Mitchell Starc doesn't come, as is widely anticipated, then Mustafizur's left-arm seam bowling, with expertise in death overs, would come in handy. "The JSW and GMR co-owned franchise Delhi Capitals today announced the signing of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman as a replacement for Australian opener Jake Fraser-McGurk, who will be unavailable for the remainder of the TATA IPL 2025 season," the franchise stated in a release. Mustafizur, who made his IPL debut in 2016, previously represented the Delhi Capitals during the 2022 and 2023 seasons. Over the course of his IPL career, the 29-year-old has played 38 matches, claiming 38 wickets at an economy rate of 7.84.

Olympian Neeraj conferred honorary rank of Lt Colonel



The two-time Olympic medalist was earlier enrolled as a Junior Commissioned Officer in the rank of Naib Subedar in the Indian Army August 26, 2016, before being promoted to Subedar in 2021 after his heroics in Tokyo

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 14: India's star athlete Neeraj Chopra has been conferred with the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army. The announcement was made by the Ministry of Defence in the Gazette of India, a weekly authorised journal of the Government of India, Wednesday.

Chopra became India's most successful individual Olympian after he claimed a silver medal at the 2024 Paris Olympics in the javelin throw, marking his second medal at the Games after his historic gold in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Chopra became the first Indian track and field athlete to win a gold medal in Tokyo. He ended his 2024 season with a second-place finish in the prestigious Diamond League Final in Brussels.

"No 3 (E) dated 9 May 2025 in

exercise of the powers conferred by Para 31 of the Territorial Army Regulations, 1948, the president is pleased to confer Honorary Rank of Lieutenant Colonel in Territorial Army on Ex-Sub Maj Neeraj Chopra, PVSM, Padma Shri, VSM, Village & Post Office Khandra, Panipat, Haryana with effect from 16 April, 2025," the Gazette of India read.

Neeraj was earlier enrolled as a Junior Commissioned Officer in the rank of Naib Subedar in the Indian Army August 26, 2016, before being promoted to Subedar in 2021 after his heroics in Tokyo.

Like the gold medalist, there are a few more individual medalists at the quadrennial Games who hold ranks in the Indian Army. Abhinav Bindra, who made history in the Beijing 2008 Olympics by becoming the first Indian to win an individual gold medal, was also conferred with the honour of being a Lt. Colonel, and shooter Vijay Kumar was made an honorary Captain after winning a silver medal in 2012.

One of the most famous athletes to receive the honour has been Mahendra Singh Dhoni. After guiding India to major tournament victories, including the 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup, he was awarded the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army in 2011.

SHORT TAKES

Praggnanandhaa draws, Gukesh loses again

Bucharest: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland to maintain joint lead with 3.5 points but compatriot D Gukesh lost a tense battle against Alireza Firouzja of France in the sixth round of Superbet Chess Classics, a part of the grand chess tour. Playing the black side of an English opening, Praggnanandhaa was subjected to some initial tactics by Duda, who is looking forward to come back in the event, but the Indian was quite up to the task in not giving any free-way to his Polish opponent. Gukesh, not at his best, suffered his second loss in the event late Tuesday night and, in live rankings, slipped to number five with Arjun Erigaisi taking over as the new world number three.

Gauff advances to Italian Open semis

Rome: Coco Gauff extended her unbeaten streak against Mirra Andreeva to reach the Italian Open semifinals Wednesday. Gauff played aggressively throughout to advance to the last four at the clay-court tournament for the third time with a 6-4, 7-6 (5) win. Both players hit high-quality shots in the tiebreaker, including Andreeva's superb drop shot just behind the net from a tight angle that allowed her to level at 5-5 before Gauff won the last two points to seal the match. Gauff has won all four of her matches against the 18-year-old Andreeva, having also beaten her at the French Open and US Open in 2023, and two weeks ago in Madrid.

Pakistan doubtful for Asia Cup hockey

New Delhi: The national federation is awaiting a government advisory but Pakistan's participation in this year's Hero Asia Cup hockey tournament in India is in serious doubt because of the prevalent tension between the two countries after the Pahalgam terror attack. The Asia Cup will be staged in Rajgir, Bihar from August 27 to September 7. Hosts India, Pakistan, Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Oman and Chinese Taipei are scheduled to participate in the 12th edition of the continental showpiece, a qualifying tournament for next year's World Cup to be held in Netherlands and Belgium.

KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES

Odisha lose in penalty, bag silver

Patna: In the final match of the 7th Khelo India Youth Games 2025, Odisha's U18 men's football team secured the silver medal, finishing as runners-up. The highly competitive final ended in a 2-2 draw in regulation time, leading to a penalty shootout where Jharkhand edged past Odisha by 5-4. Despite the narrow loss in the shootout, Odisha showcased resilience, skill, and determination throughout the tournament. The office bearers and members of the Football Association of Odisha have extended their heartfelt congratulations to the entire team and support staff for their outstanding performance throughout the tournament, and for bringing glory to the state.



Maha steal thunder in athletics

Patna: Maharashtra finished on top of the heap in athletics competitions with 10 gold, one silver, and two bronze medals in the Khelo India Youth Games 2025 at the Patliputra Sports Complex here Wednesday. Haryana picked up the most medals, 19, winning six gold, six silver, and seven bronze. Tamil Nadu followed with six gold, six silver, and six bronze medals to its credit. Fourth in the boys' 400m, Saket Minj claimed the 200m gold in a time of 21.54 seconds, while Shekh Zeeshan's Triple Jump gold came after he hopped, skipped, and jumped over 15.66m, and the Haryana girls' quartet rewrote the 4x400m meet mark with a time of 3:48.44.



THAILAND OPEN

Mixed day for shuttlers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, May 14: Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen suffered a shock defeat but the trio of Malvika Bansod, Aakarshi Kashyap and Unnati Hooda advanced to the women's singles second round after hard-fought victories in the \$475,000 Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here Wednesday.

World No 10 pair of Tressa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, currently the best-ranked Indians in the world, also made a positive start to their campaign, reaching the second round with a 21-15 21-13 win over Malaysia's Ong XY and C Ting.

The third-seeded Indian combination, which is returning after missing the Sudirman Cup mixed team championships due to injuries, will next square off against Japan's Rui Hirokami and Sayaka Hobara.

Sen, a 2021 World Championships bronze medalist, fell to Ireland's Nhat Nguyen in a tense three-game battle, losing 18-21 21-9 17-21 in a men's singles match that lasted one hour and 20 minutes.

After dropping the first game, Sen found his rhythm in the second, dominating with ag-



gressive rallies. However, Nguyen held his nerve in a close-decider, edging ahead at 17-13 before sealing the win.

World No 33 Priyanshu Rajawat too made a first-round exit as he went down 13-21 21-17 16-21 against Alwi Farhan of Indonesia. In women's singles, world No 23 Malvika, a runner-up at the 2024 Hlyo Open, ousted Turkey's Neslihan Arin 21-12 13-21 21-17 to set up a clash with former world champion Ratchanok Intanon, seeded seventh.

Aakarshi survived a thrilling contest against Japan's Kaoru Sugiyama, winning 21-16 20-22 22-20. It was a match of narrow margins, with the Indian holding her nerve in the final stages of the decider.

The 17-year-old Unnati, the 2022 Odisha Masters and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters winner, also fought her way through to the next round, registering a gritty 21-14 18-21 23-21 victory over Thailand's Thamonwan Nithiittikrai.

GOING GLOBAL

India to host inaugural Tennis Cricket Ball World Cup and Asia Cup

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 14: Tennis cricket, a backyard sport that has long been synonymous with India's passion for the game, is set to receive international legitimacy with the launch of the first-ever Tennis Cricket Ball World Cup and Asia Cup, both scheduled to be hosted in India. This marks a historic moment as tennis ball cricket steps onto the global stage with official international and continental tournaments.

Recognizing the sport's rapid grassroots growth in India, the International Tennis Cricket Federation (ITCF) has thrown its weight behind the initiative.

The decision comes after observing the popularity and scale of domestic tennis ball cricket tournaments across the country, culminating in a new structured league format known as the Dream League of India — a competition that will now serve as the official selection platform for India's squads in both global events.

Players participating in the Dream League will have the opportunity to represent India in both the World Cup and the Asia Cup.

The league will be held across the country, ensuring widespread participation and the scouting of hidden talent from even the most remote corners. Over 1,500 certified coaches will supervise the open, fair trials conducted in various districts and centres, where junior (ages 13-18) and senior (18+) players can showcase their skills.

The league is designed with two distinct categories: juniors and seniors, each comprising six competitive franchises. Following nationwide trials, 860 players from each category will be shortlisted for the league auction, where teams will select their squads. Top performers will not only be under the radar of ITCF selectors but will also compete for a place in India's tennis cricket squad on the international stage.

Peace with Sinner: Tennis fan Pope Leo XIV meets with No 1

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vatican City, May 14: Pope Leo XIV has made peace with Yannik Sinner.

The top-ranked tennis player visited the new pope Wednesday, gave him a tennis racket and offered to play, during an off day for Sinner at the Italian Open.

Leo, the first American pope, is an avid tennis player and fan and had said earlier this week that he would be up for a charity match when it was suggested by a journalist.

But at the time, Leo joked "but we can't invite Sinner," an apparent reference to the English meaning of Sinner's last name.

By Wednesday, all seemed



forgotten. "It's an honour," Sinner said in Italian as he and his parents arrived in a reception room of the Vatican's auditorium. Holding

one of his rackets and giving Leo another and a ball, Sinner suggested a quick volley. But the pope looked at the antiques around and said, "Better not."

Leo, a 69-year-old from Chicago, then appeared to joke about his white cassock and its appropriateness for Wimbledon, noting the All England Club's all-white clothing rule.

He asked how the Italian Open was going: "Now I'm in the game," Sinner said. "At the beginning of the tournament, it was a bit difficult."

The top-ranked player has a quarterfinal match Thursday in his first tournament back after a three-month ban for doping that was judged to be an accidental contamination.

Sinner will next face either freshly crowned Madrid champion Casper Ruud or Jaume Munar. Sinner is attempting to become the first Italian man to win the Rome title since Adri-

ano Panatta in 1976.

During the audience, Angelo Binaghi, the head of the Italian Tennis and Padel Federation, gave Leo an honorary federation card. On hand in the room was the Davis Cup trophy that Sinner helped Italy win for the second consecutive time last year.

Earlier in the week, after Leo's first quip about not wanting to invite him, Sinner said it was "a good thing for us tennis players" that the new pope likes to play the sport.

In addition to tennis, Leo is an avid Chicago White Sox baseball fan.

His predecessor, Pope Francis, was a lifelong fan of Buenos Aires soccer club San Lorenzo.