



Stage jitters

Actor Shruti Haasan shares her pre-stage nerves and how she gradually learned to overcome them

LEISURE | P2



Putin snubs talks

Putin rejects proposed meeting with Zelenskyy in Turkey, delivering a setback to hopes for a breakthrough in peace efforts

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Export rises

India's exports rise by 9.03 per cent to \$38.49 billion in April, while trade deficit widens to a five-month high of \$26.42 billion

BUSINESS | P11



Long wait ends

Bologna end a 51-year wait for a major trophy when it beat AC Milan 1-0 to win the Italian Cup

SPORTS | P12

Unseasonal rains now state-specific disaster



Now, farmers will be able to get assistance from the State Disaster Response Fund for crop loss in unseasonal rainfall. A maximum of 10 per cent of the annual allocation of SDRF can be used for the purpose

In December last year, crops over 22,791-hectare of land were damaged due to unseasonal rains, and about 6.66 lakh farmers were affected

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The Odisha government Thursday declared unseasonal rains as state-specific disaster so that farmers can be compensated for crop loss, a statement said.

A proposal of the Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) department in this regard was approved by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, it said.

As a result of this, farmers will be able to get assistance from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for crop loss in unseasonal rainfall, it said, adding that a maximum of 10 per cent of the annual allocation of SDRF can be used for the purpose.

In December last year, crops over 22,791-hectare of land were damaged due to unseasonal rains, and about 6.66 lakh farmers were affected.

According to R&DM department sources, farmers in many coastal and interior districts like Angul, Balasore, Bhadrak, Boudh, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Deogarh, Gajapati, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kandhamal, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Nayagarh, Puri, and Raygada sustained crop loss.

The state government declared it a special state disaster and provided Rs 291 crore as agricultural input subsidies to farmers. Other state-specific disasters in Odisha are lightning, heatwave, whirlwind, tornado, heavy rain and boat accidents in the absence of flood, drowning and snakebite.

There are 12 centrally-approved disasters including cyclone, drought, earthquake and flood.



NO TAKERS: 'Shikaras' are anchored at the deserted Dal Lake in Srinagar, Thursday. The city has witnessed a decrease in footfall of visitors after last month's terror attack in Pahalgam

Nukes not safe in Pak hands: Rajnath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, May 15: Pakistan's nuclear weapons should be brought under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as they are not safe in such a rogue nation, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Thursday.

Singh's comments came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India would not tolerate 'nuclear blackmail' by Pakistan and would punish cross-border terrorism strongly.

Shortly after landing in Srinagar in his first trip to J&K since Operation Sindoor, Singh said how strong is India's resolve against terrorism can be gauged from the fact that it has not even paid heed to Pakistan's nuclear blackmail.

"The whole world has seen how irresponsibly Pakistan has given nuclear threats to India several times," he said interacting with troops.

"Today, from the land of Srinagar, I want to raise this question before the whole world: are nuclear weapons safe in the hands of such an irresponsible and rogue nation?" Singh asked.

"I believe that Pakistan's nuclear weapons should be taken under the supervision of International Atomic Energy Agency," he added.

Security clearance for Turkish firm revoked

New Delhi: The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) Thursday revoked the security clearance for Turkish company Celebi Airport Services India Pvt Ltd in the 'interest of national security', days after Turkey backed Pakistan and condemned India's strikes on terror camps in the neighbouring country. Celebi, operating in the Indian aviation sector for over 15 years and employing over 10,000 people, offers its services at nine airports. Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoohan Naidu said national interest and public safety are paramount and non-negotiable. "... the security clearance in r/o Celebi Airport Services India Pvt Ltd is hereby revoked with immediate effect in the interest of national security," BCAS said in an order.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Sir, you can't punish me for using gutter language. That's a prerequisite for becoming a minister

Trump: India offered to drop all tariffs on American goods

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, May 15: US President Donald Trump Thursday claimed that India has offered to drop all tariffs on American goods.

Speaking at a business roundtable in Doha, Trump also said he had a 'little problem' with Tim Cook, and he told the Apple CEO that he does not want him to build iPhones in India. Trump, who is in Qatar as part of his four-day visit to the Gulf region, was talking about Apple's plans to make iPhones in India.

"I said to him (Cook), my friend, I am treating you very good. You are coming up with \$500 billion, but now I hear you are building all over India. I don't want you building in India. You can build in India, if you want to take care of India because India is one of the highest tariff nations in the world, so it is very hard to sell in India," Trump said.

"They [India] have offered us a deal where basically they have agreed to charge us literally no tariffs. I said 'Tim, we are treating you really good, we put up with all the plants you built

Complicated negotiations: Jaishankar

In New Delhi, responding to queries on Trump's Qatar statement, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar said Thursday these are complicated negotiations and nothing is decided till everything is. "Between India and the US, trade talks have been going on, negotiations have been going on, in fact, I think, a team is just going, at this point. These are very complicated negotiations, they are very intricate, and nothing is decided till everything is. But, any trade deal has to be mutually beneficial, any trade deal has to work for both the countries, and I think that would be our expectation from the trade deal, and until that is done, I think any judgment on it would be premature," he said. When asked about the deadline to conclude these negotiations, an official said that there is a target to conclude the first tranche by fall (September-October) of this year. "Let's see, how fast we can get this deal done. We want to conclude it as early as possible," the official said, adding there is also a target to double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.

in China for years. We are not interested in you building in India. India can take care of themselves," he added. While Apple did not respond to an e-mail sent for comments, sources said Indian officials spoke to executives of the Cupertino-based firm on Trump's statements.

"Apple has said that its investment plans in India are intact and it proposes to continue to have India as a major manufacturing base for its products," the source said. Trump's comments came nearly two weeks after Cook said his company made quarterly records in several countries, including India.

Apple will source the majority of the iPhones sold in the US from India in the June quarter, while China will produce the vast majority of the devices for other markets amid uncertainty over tax tariffs, Cook said earlier this month. According to an analysis by S&P Global, Apple's iPhone sales in the US were 75.9 million units in 2024, with exports in March from India equivalent to 3.1 million units.

Earlier this month, Trump had claimed that India 'agreed' to drop its high tariffs 'to nothing'. In the past, Trump has called India 'tariff king' and a 'big abuser'.

3 JeM terrorists killed in Pulwama encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, May 15: Three Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in J&K's Pulwama Thursday.

Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Nader Tral area of Awantipora in south Kashmir. The search operation turned into a gunfight after the terrorists opened fire at the forces who retaliated. "The eliminated terrorists were identified as Asif Ahmed Sheikh, Amir Nazir Wani and Yawar Ahmed Bhat," Army's Chinara Corps said.

Police said the terrorists belonged to the proscribed JeM.

Pak offers 'peace' talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, May 15: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday extended an offer of talks to India, saying Pakistan is ready to engage 'for peace'.

Shehbaz made the comments during a visit to the Kamra air base in the country's Punjab province where he interacted with officers and soldiers involved in the recent military confrontation with India.

"We are ready to talk with it (India) for peace," he said.

He added that the 'conditions for peace' include the Kashmir issue. India has maintained that the UT of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh 'are and always will be inte-

gral and inalienable parts of it'.

This was the PM's second visit to a defence facility following the understanding reached between India and Pakistan May 10 to end the conflict after days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

India launched Operation Sindoor on the intervening night of May 6 and 7 to avenge the killings of 26 people in the Pahalgam terror attack. Indian armed forces targeted nine terror sites in Pakistan and PoK, killing over 100 terrorists.

Pakistan then attempted to attack several Indian military bases May 8, 9 and 10. The Indian armed forces launched a fierce counter-attack on several Pakistani military installations.

Qureshi remarks: SC raps MP min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Every word uttered by a minister has to be with a sense of responsibility at a time the country is undergoing 'such a situation', the Supreme Court said Thursday as it reprimanded Madhya Pradesh (MP) minister Vijay Shah who is facing an FIR for his remarks targeting Colonel Sofiya Qureshi.

"What sort of statements are

you making? You are a responsible minister of the government," Chief Justice BR Gavai told Shah's counsel. The bench, also comprising Justice Augustine George Masih, said the SC would Friday hear Shah's plea challenging the MP HC's May 14 order directing an FIR against him for the comments.

"When this country is undergoing such a situation, every sentence or word uttered by a

responsible minister has to be with a sense of responsibility," the CJ told Shah's counsel.

Advocate Vibha Datta Makhiya, appearing for Shah, mentioned the matter for urgent listing and said the HC had taken suo motu cognisance and asked for registration of an FIR. Later, another lawyer mentioned before the bench a separate petition which sought action against Shah for his remarks against Colonel Qureshi.

10 militants gunned down

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, May 15: At least 10 militants were killed in a gunfight with an Assam Rifles' unit in Manipur's Chandel district, officials said.

The operation is still in progress, they said.

The Army's Eastern Command said in a post on X Wednesday, "Acting on specific intelligence on movement of armed cadres near the New Samtal village, Khengjoy tehsil, Chandel district, close to the Indo-Myanmar border, Assam Rifles' unit under Spear Corps launched an operation May 14."

"During the operation, the troops were fired upon by suspected cadres to which they quickly reacted, redeployed and retaliated in a calibrated



and measured manner. In the ensuing fire fight, 10 cadres were neutralised and a sizeable quantity of arms and ammunition were recovered," it added.

Defence PRO based in Kohima told PTI Thursday morning, "The operation is still underway... when it gets over, we will be able to share details."

When asked about the identity of the militants involved, a Central security official said, "The troops are still conducting operations and the identity is yet to be confirmed."

Harvard's Magna Carta copy turns out to be an original

For 80 years, Harvard Law School believed the Magna Carta it bought for \$27.50 was a reproduction. Now, British researchers think the document is a genuine version—one of a few still in existence.

The Magna Carta was originally written in 1215 and agreed on by King John of England. It was periodically reissued by monarchs over the next century. The one that Harvard has appears to date to 1300, during the reign of Edward I.

A seminal document in legal history, the Magna Carta asserts that the king is subject to the law, and recognises limits in his power. It has influenced constitutions globally, including the US's founding documents.

The document, which spent

decades in a vault, is now being secured in an undisclosed location, said Jonathan Zittrain, a Harvard Law School professor and chair of its library. He declined to say how much the school believes the document is now worth.

The school is still determining if it will put the newly-verified document on display.

The journey of Harvard's Magna Carta from reproduction to real deal started with some internet sleuthing in late 2023. David Carpenter, a medieval history professor at King's College, was in his study in London doing what 'may sound like dry as dust' research about Magna Carta copies for a coming book.

The picture on Harvard Law School's website caught



his eye. It had a capital 'E' at the start, and the name 'Edwardus' in the first line and was dated 1300, when King Edward I was in power. "They seemed to have no awareness of what they had," Carpenter said. With the school's version, there are 25 known Magna Cartas, with most of them in the UK, he said.

Carpenter said he emailed

a picture to another expert, Nicholas Vincent, a medieval history professor at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. "I was arguing with Belgian librarians about whether I could see something really rather dull when this thing arrived," he said.

His mood changed when he saw it. "There was just no question," Vincent said.

"You know damn well what that is," he said he wrote back to Carpenter.

Car Carpenter alerted Harvard right away by email, and the men continued to build their case while they waited. They kept their work quiet from other academics.

In the spring of 2024, Harvard agreed to do special imaging of

the document to verify if it was real, Carpenter said. Harvard has also had its experts look over Vincent and Carpenter's work, Zittrain said, adding that the school had never questioned the document's origins because it was told it was a copy when it purchased it.

The last time a Magna Carta was publicly sold was in 2007. David Rubenstein, a co-founder of the private equity firm Carlyle Group, paid \$21.3 million at an auction for the 1297 version previously owned by Texas billionaire and two-time presidential candidate Ross Perot. Perot had bought it for \$1.5 million two decades earlier. It is now on display at the National Archives in Washington, DC, courtesy of Rubenstein.

leisure



SCARLETT: OSCARS SNUBBED AVENGERS: ENDGAME

Scarlett Johansson feels *Avengers: Endgame* was unfairly overlooked by the Academy. Though the film received a nomination for Visual Effects, it missed out on a Best Picture nod. Even years later, Johansson remains baffled, still asking the same question: "How did this film not receive a nomination?"

AL PACINO TO DO CAMEO IN MASERATI: THE BROTHERS

Legendary Hollywood star Al Pacino has joined the cast of Bobby Moresco's directorial *Maserati: The Brothers*, a biopic about the family behind the high-performance automobiles that, along with Ferrari and Lamborghini, Italy is popularly known for. Pacino's cameo in the film was announced by producer Andrea Iervolino



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ARIES
Today, you may want to wear your power suit, says Ganesha. If you notice people bending and bowing a bit, understand that your hard work has paid off! If not, then you need to get more organised. Either way, there's work to be done.

TAURUS
The competitive streak in you might relent today as you look for a lifestyle that is more relaxed and laid-back. The rat race is tiring and you will feel the urge to get away, far from the maddening crowd and the never-ending routine. Matters pertaining to your home may also occupy some of your time today, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
An extremely productive and fulfilling day awaits you. Along with your daily routine, you will also concentrate on your household issues. You will feel the need to have someone to call your own. You may find yourself in two minds over things like marriage and partnership. It is a good day to sell something, says Ganesha.

CANCER
An awareness of optimism and idealism will mark your activities this day. You may benefit by traversing from one terrain to another. You will be liberal and generous with ideas; your internal beauty will blossom.

LEO
You are fond of travelling. You will make plans for a trip or a journey and will include your family and friends in your schemes. For those in artistic fields, you will receive critical acclaim. A progressive day awaits, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
It is not the time to rest on your past laurels, and you will have to carry on with your work unabated. You will have to keep your focus steady and remain organised to get the same level of success that you had in the recent past. Ganesha advises you not to neglect your relationships, as they are the corner stones of your success and tranquility.

LIBRA
If there's a knock on your door today, there's a very strong possibility it might be a marriage proposal. Don't get startled, and grab opportunities that come knocking (literally!). The stars send you a partner who shall be your match in every way. Have a long and happy married life, says Ganesha.

SCORPIO
You are in a dilemma and feel like standing at a crossroads of life. Some important decisions of life need time and that's what you want right now. However, keep personal life and work separate to avoid confusion and disturbance. As per Ganesha's advice, it's all right if decision making takes some time, but avoid taking hasty decisions.

SAGITTARIUS
The pressing needs of your loved ones call for extra attention today. A small party at home may see a group of friends and relatives dine together. This may find you in a chatty mood. Ganesha says an intimate tête-à-tête with your better half would fare you well.

CAPRICORN
The day will sail smooth, but your mind will wreak havoc by forcing you to act on the spur of the moment, says Ganesha. However, this will not ruin your reputation with bosses and peers. You may also see some of your dreams come true, but don't fly too high; you may climb up the ladder of success but with every step you leave behind there is always one more to go. Concentrate on your work a little more and the goal will certainly seem closer.

AQUARIUS
Your dream house or car may well be on its way! The stars proclaim that it's a good time to acquire new assets. So bring out those attractive brochures and check out your loan prospects. A perfect way to end an exciting day will be an evening at a quiet temple, says Ganesha.

PISCES
A good day awaits you. You will finish your work and beat your deadlines by miles on account of the luck favouring you. There are chances that a family holiday, which has been in the planning for a long time, will eventually come to fruition today, says Ganesha.

KAMAL GETS CANDID



Mumbai: Cinema icon Kamal Haasan is celebrated today as one of Indian cinema's greatest talents, but his rise to fame was anything but conventional. In a candid interview, the actor-filmmaker opened up about his rebellious youth and the pivotal moments that shaped his path. Kamal revealed he once worked as a barber—not out of passion, but to defy his mother, who disapproved of his time spent reading and watching films. "To insult her, I became a barber," he shared. This very incident inspired a scene in K. Balachander's *Zara Si Zindagi*.

More than just a filmmaker, Balachander became Kamal's mentor, offering advice that changed the trajectory of his life. When a 19-year-old Kamal expressed a desire to direct, Balachander warned him, "If you become a director, you'll be riding around in auto rickshaws for the rest of your life." Kamal later admitted, "Forget riding—I'd have died in one if I hadn't listened."

Reflecting on friends who didn't make it, Kamal expressed gratitude for the guidance that saved him. Now a celebrated actor, writer, and director, he continues to break boundaries. Up next, Kamal is set to reunite with another iconic filmmaker—his longtime collaborator and friend Mani Ratnam—for the highly anticipated *Thug Life*.

Shruti: Stage fear helps drive passion

Mumbai: Actress Shruti Haasan opened up about the nerves she experiences before going on stage and how she has learned to overcome them over time. Sharing her journey, the actress revealed that while pre-performance nervousness still lingers, it now serves as a source of motivation that drives her passion and dedication. When asked if she ever gets nervous before a performance, Shruti told this news agency, "I used to get really nervous before performance over time. Like, super super nervous. Now of course, I'm much better, but I still get like excited, feeling in my stomach. But it's just that before performing, which I think is great, it motivates me. But I love to dedicate time practice."

"I think my band gets annoyed sometimes because I always ask for more rehearsals. I really love to rehearse with everybody and rehearse as much as I can when it comes to music. When it comes to acting, I don't like rehearsing like too much, but I have no problem over rehearsing when it comes to music." The *Ramaiya Vastavaiya* actress also shared insights into her musical journey, revealing that some of her favorite songs to perform live are her originals, *Wash Me Away* and *Bury Me*.



RSFF: Jacqueliene to represent India

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Jacqueliene Fernandez, who is all set to represent India at the Red Sea Film Festival (RSFF), being hosted at the 78th Cannes Film Festival, says she is delighted to be an honouree at the event.

The actress took to Instagram with a series of stunning pictures from her visit to the Cannes Film Festival, where she turned heads in a striking white and silver ensemble.

Her post offered fans a behind-the-scenes glimpse into her glamorous journey from getting her makeup done to giving interviews and sharing radiant moments with fellow honourees.

For the caption, Jacqueliene wrote: "Cannes Day 1 with @redseafilm Delighted to be an honouree at the women in cinema initiative that champions female storytellers. #redseafilm #womenincinema #redseafilmfoundation."

The Red Sea International Film Festival has announced its seven honourees for its annual Women in Cinema Gala, which spotlights contributions of female filmmakers, creators, actors and executives to the entertainment industry.

It includes names such as Zambian-Welsh writer-director Rungano Nyoni, South Asian actress Jacqueline Fernandez, Egyptian actress Amina Khalil, Saudi actress Elham Ali, Thai actress Engfa Waraha, Syrian filmmaker Gaya Jiji and Saudi filmmaker and artist Sarah Taiba, reports deadline.com.

Fan celebrates with kind deed

Mumbai: In a heartwarming gesture on the occasion of Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit's 58th birthday, a philanthropist and fan in Jamshedpur solemnised the marriages of three poor girls, following all traditional customs and rituals.

The event took place at Sakchi Manohar Chart and was marked by prayers, celebrations, and a midnight cake-cutting ceremony honouring the actresses' special day. Every year, Pappu Sardar celebrates Dixit's birthday with great enthusiasm, and this year was no different. A source close to the development revealed that the celebrations began with devotional prayers to seek blessings for the day. At 8:00

PM, the wedding ceremonies for the three girls commenced, attended by their families as well as the grooms. The weddings were conducted with full adherence to cultural traditions.

After the ceremonies concluded, Pappu extended his heartfelt congratulations to the newlywed couples and gifted them essential household items as dowry to help start their new lives. Later, as the clock struck midnight, Pappu cut a cake to commemorate Madhuri's birthday.

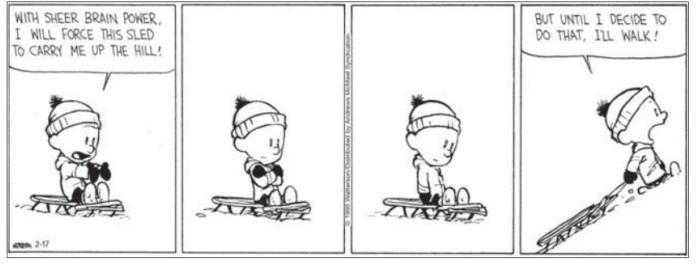
Speaking to the media, Pappu expressed his pride in giving a priceless gift to his sister by arranging these marriages. He described the experience of performing 'kanyadaan'—the ceremonial giving away of the bride—as deeply fulfilling.



PEANUTS



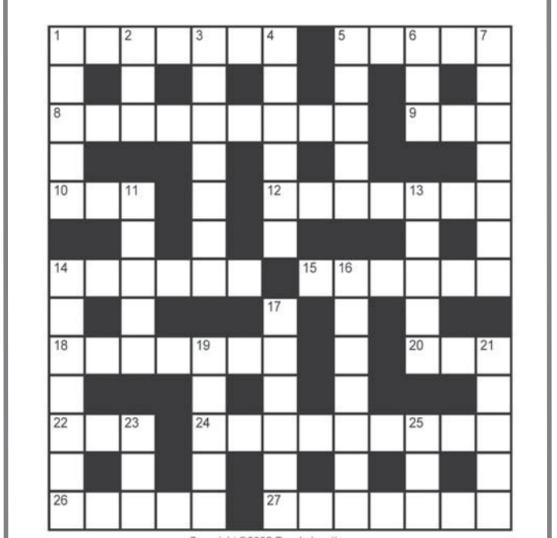
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



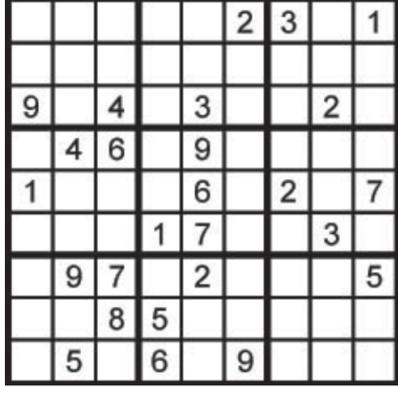
FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Australian marsupials
 - 5 Zeno, notably
 - 8 Permit
 - 9 After caudal or dorsal
 - 10 Pound sound
 - 12 Overshadow
 - 14 Dieters' dishes
 - 15 Tidbit
 - 18 Gloves
 - 20 Lennon's lady
 - 22 Coffee holder
 - 24 Reddish-orange colour
 - 26 Peruvian peaks
 - 27 Learned person
 - 7 Solidify
 - 11 Aviator
 - 13 Basil-based sauce
 - 14 Italian elderberry liqueur
 - 16 Flightless bird
 - 17 Seizes
 - 19 Roof overhangs
 - 21 Title holder
 - 23 Silent assent
 - 25 Indisposed

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

4 MORE COACHES FOR VANDE BHARAT EXP

The East Coast Railway Thursday said it has decided to add four coaches to Vande Bharat Express between Howrah and Puri, owing to high demand for tickets by passengers. The expansion of coaches from 16 to 20 will take effect from May 16. Four AC chair car coaches will be added, aimed at accommodating the growing number of passengers travelling on this semi-high-speed service.



downtown

Ensure govt schemes reach grassroots: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday called upon development officers to ensure that developmental schemes effectively reach the grassroots. He said this while addressing the State-level Conference of Chief Development Officers (CDOs) and Block Development Officers (BDOs) at Lok Seva Bhawan.



The CM urged the officers to work with dedication and spirit of public service, stressing that officers must act as a strong bridge between the government and the people. "Our blocks are the mirror of our administrative success. If they function efficiently and people receive the benefits of all schemes, it will reflect the competence of our government," the Chief Minister said.

Majhi highlighted the crucial role played by district and block-level officials in ensuring that developmental schemes effectively reach the grassroots. "After the District Collector, Chief Development Officers and BDOs shoulder the primary responsibility of implementation. You are directly in touch with the people and understand their problems firsthand," he noted.

He urged officials to deliver welfare schemes with sincerity and without bias. "These programmes are the rights of the people, not charity. You are not just administrators—you are the bridge between the people and the govern-

ment. A strong bridge ensures effective communication and delivery," he added.

"Do not take me for a simple tribal person, and my simplicity should not be considered a weakness," he said. "I started my political career as a sarpanch of a panchayat in Keonjhar. Because of this, I am aware of the activities of officers at the grassroots level," he added.

Majhi warned of strict action against negligence or corruption. "Work with a service mindset. I consider myself Odisha's Chief Servant, as PM Modi calls himself the Chief Servant of the nation. Any dereliction of duty will not be tolerated," he stated firmly.

He also emphasised the importance of employment gener-

ation under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), advocating the use of human labour over machines to reduce rural unemployment and migration.

Panchayati Raj Minister Rabi Narayan Naik echoed Gandhi's philosophy, stating that village development is the foundation of national progress. Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja added that rural development is central to Odisha's roadmap for progress.

The two-day conference saw participation from 30 CDOs and 314 BDOs, focusing on better coordination and field-level execution of flagship schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Vision 2047, Subhadra, and Vikasit Gaon Vikasit Odisha.

Governor flags off Tricolour bike rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack/Malkangiri, May 15: Governor Hari Babu Kamthampati Thursday flagged off a National Tricolour bike rally or 'Parakram Shobhayatra' in Cuttack town to commemorate the success of Operation Sindoor.

The event was a tribute to the unmatched valour and unwavering dedication of the Indian Armed Forces. The rally began from near Netaji Smarak and witnessed enthusiastic participation from people of all walks of life.

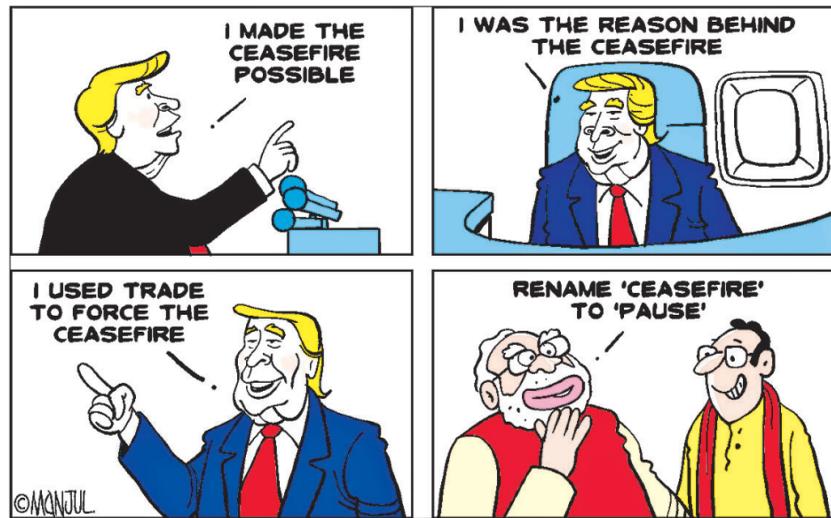
Government officials, police personnel, National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams, Fire Services officials, teachers, students, athletes, women, and intellectuals came together in solidarity to honour the bravery of the nation's soldiers.

Holding the national flag with pride, the participants moved around the city before concluding the rally at Swaraj Ashram. Prior to flagging off the rally, the Governor garlanded the statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and visited Netaji Birthplace Museum.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Cuttack Mayor Subhash Chandra Singh, Revenue Divisional Commissioner (Central) B Parameswaran, Cuttack Collector Dattatraya Bhausaheb Shinde, Deputy Commissioner of Police Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo, and Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Commissioner Anam Charan Patra.

Similarly, a National tricolour bike rally was also held in Malkangiri district headquarters town, where people from different walks of life participated.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



State to auction 30 iron ore mines

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday informed the steel manufacturing companies that the government is likely to auction around 30 iron ore mines this year.

The assurance was given by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi when he met a delegation of Indian Steel Association (ISA) led by its president Naveen Jindal at Lok Seva Bhawan here.

Referring to the concerns of the steel makers over the difficulty in availing raw materials, the state government said that about 30 iron ore mines are likely to be auctioned this year, an official release said.

Efforts are also on for an ear-

ly start of mining from the already auctioned mines, it said.

Discussions were held on how iron ore can be provided to steel companies at a convenient rate from the state-owned Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC). Majhi told the ISA delegation that there is a need to increase steel production in the state.

He said the state has set a goal to build a prosperous Odisha by 2036, when it observes 100 years of its formation.

Noting that the mining and steel sector will have a significant contribution to make Odisha prosperous, Majhi stated that his government has been emphasising the need to provide raw materials and other facilities to companies that set up units in the state.

The CM said that all facilities

will be provided to the steel companies after thorough discussions. It was discussed at the meeting that the steel production in the country is 165 million tonne per annum, and a target has been set to increase it to 500 million tonne by 2047.

The state government also informed the delegation that Odisha is the top producer of both iron ore and stainless steel in India, with 54 integrated steel plants, having a capacity of 41.21 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) at present, the release said.

The state has set a target to produce 130 MTPA of steel by 2030, and it would require about 190 million tonnes of iron ore.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and other senior officials.

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Govt, NSE ink pact to boost students' financial literacy

Singh Deo pushes for faster irrigation work

Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj highlights the need for practical financial skills to prepare youth for today's evolving economy



financial literacy programme. The NSE will impart two fundamental courses as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity, Suraj said.

NSE to offer free financial literacy courses under CSR initiative. Initiative to equip students for careers in stock markets and BFSI sector

insights to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application.

Officials highlighted that this partnership builds upon earlier collaborations, such as the state's engagement with the BFSI Sector Skill Council and the Board of Practical Training (BOPT).

The agreement aims to enhance financial literacy through investor awareness programmes and implement structured skilling initiatives for students across the state.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, who emphasised the importance of financial awareness in today's dynamic economic environment.

"This partnership with NSE goes beyond classroom learning. It's about equipping our youth with practical knowledge and the confidence to participate in the financial sector. Together, we're laying the foundation for a financially aware and self-reliant Odisha," he said.

The state government will not bear any cost for implementation of two courses on

After imparting coaching, the youths can build careers as mutual fund advisor, financial advisor, policy broker and stock broker, Suraj said, adding, it will largely benefit the commerce stream students.

The collaboration will provide students with skills required to find employment in the securities market, mutual funds, investment advisors and Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) sector.

The initiative is designed to help students make informed financial decisions, foster responsible investing habits, and develop skills aligned with the growing demand in the Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) sector.

NSE's chief business development officer, Sriram Krishnan, reiterated the exchange's commitment to youth development, noting that over 7,500 students have already been trained under similar skilling programmes nationwide.

"From April 2024 to March 2025, the NSE conducted 14,679 investor awareness programmes in 14 languages across all 36 states and Union Territories reaching more than 8 lakh participants," he said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo chaired a high-level review meeting Thursday at the Lok Seva Bhavan Conference Hall to assess the progress of the Upper Lanth and Lower Indra Irrigation Projects.

Singh Deo instructed officials from the Water Resources department to accelerate project execution. Emphasising the projects' potential impact, he



noted that upon completion, they will bring irrigation facilities to 29,900 hectares of agricultural land across Bolangir and Nuapada districts.

The Deputy CM underlined that, in addition to improving crop yields, the projects would

support allied agricultural activities, increase rural incomes, and play a critical role in reducing distress migration from the region.

He urged officials to swiftly resolve any procedural bottlenecks, including those related to land acquisition, compensa-

tion, environmental clearances, and resettlement. "Bring such issues to my notice directly for prompt intervention," Singh Deo said.

Anu Garg led a detailed discussion on both the technical and administrative aspects of the projects. Engineer-in-Chief of the Water Resources department, Chandrashekhar Padhy, along with senior engineers and officials, also took part in the deliberations.

District Collectors of Bolangir and Nuapada, along with officials from the Forest Department, joined the meeting virtually, providing updates from the field.

SSU launches future intelligence institute

The institute will offer specialised degree programmes aligned with industry trends, and house advanced R&D labs in artificial intelligence, sustainability, and innovation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 15: Marking the birth anniversary of spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Sri Sri University (SSU), Cuttack has announced the launch of the Sri Sri Institute of Future Intelligence and Innovation—a pioneering centre that blends ancient wisdom with cutting-edge technology.

The inauguration ceremony was held recently at the Art of Living International Centre in Bangalore.

The institute aims to be a transformative hub for education and research, with a focus on ethical AI, digital transformation, conscious innovation, and future-ready leadership. Grounded in the

Institute to blend ancient wisdom with ethical AI and innovation. Offers future-ready programmes, research labs, and global collaborations

values of mindful living and human-centered progress, it aspires to shape leaders who combine technical excellence with compassion, clarity, and purpose.

"At the Sri Sri Institute of Future Intelligence and Innovation, we believe technology must serve humanity—not the other way around," emphasised the university's leadership during the inauguration.

The institute will offer specialised degree programmes

aligned with industry trends, and house advanced R&D labs in artificial intelligence, sustainability, and innovation. It will also nurture socially responsible entrepreneurship through start-up incubators and foster global collaborations with top technology firms and academic institutions.

Beyond academics, the institute will act as a platform for community engagement through conferences, dialogues, and initiatives focused on driving meaningful social change.

With this visionary step, Sri Sri University reaffirms its commitment to shaping a future where intelligence is not only artificial—but also ethical, conscious, and elevating.

Dismiss Minister Shah: BJD to BJP

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The Opposition BJP Thursday asked the BJD to prove its "patriotism" by dismissing Madhya Pradesh Minister Vijay Shah, who allegedly made derogatory remarks against Colonel Sofiya Qureshi.

BJD spokesperson Lekhashree Samantsinghar alleged that Shah's statement showed the mindset of the BJP.

"On one hand, the BJP is organising Tiranga Yatra, and on the other hand, its minister is making hateful remarks against a female soldier. Isn't it the double standard of the BJP?" she asked.

Samantsinghar said Colonel Qureshi belonged to a family of veterans and has been dedicatedly working for the nation for a long time.

"Colonel Qureshi does not need a certificate from people like Vijay Shah. The entire country recognises her patriotism," she said.

Maintaining that Shah, the tribal affairs minister of Madhya Pradesh, has no moral right to continue in his post she said, "Let the BJP come forward and dismiss the minister who could dare to make a comment about a brave female soldier of India."

Colonel Qureshi had been at the forefront of press briefings on Operation Sindoor alongside Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh.

Following public outrage and a stern direction from the Madhya Pradesh High Court, an FIR was registered against Shah Wednesday night. Shah then moved the Supreme Court which reprimanded him saying that "Every word uttered by a minister has to be with a sense of responsibility at a time the country is undergoing 'such a situation'."

Although the minister later said he was ready to apologise "ten times" for his comments, critics across the political spectrum termed the comment as a reflection of deep-seated prejudice.

'Centre clears ₹13K-cr NH projects for Odisha'



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The Centre has approved national highway projects worth ₹13,000 crore in Odisha during the ongoing 2025-26 fiscal, Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said here Thursday.

Out of those projects, the Odisha government has set a target to complete road construction work to the tune of ₹2,000 crore by September, he said.

"We have to expedite the pace of construction work. We have set a target to make an expenditure of ₹2,000 crore by September. If we complete the projects on time, we can get (a total of) ₹13,000 crore (worth highway projects) from the Union government and create a new record on construction

of national highways in the state," he asserted.

Harichandan also expressed confidence that Odisha will be able to add to its national highways network more than what the state had achieved in the last five years.

Commenting on the national highway project connecting Sambalpur and Cuttack, he said it got delayed due to financial issues of the executing agency.

"Now, the issue has been resolved and the work is almost complete, barring some portions. I am confident that the remaining work... will be completed by the end of this year," the minister said.

The project, which began in 2017, had an initial completion target by 2020.

Row over 11.25% SEBC quota in higher edu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 15: A day after the Odisha government announced 11.25 per cent reservation for students from Socially and Economically Backward Class (SEBC) in higher education, the state's three major political parties Thursday accused each other of denying social justice to a large section of the population.

Both the opposition BJD and Congress came down heavily on the state's BJP government, accusing it of not making any provision of reservation for SEBC students in technical education such as engineering and medical studies.

The BJP rejected the allegation and claimed that it is the first government in Odisha which has made provision for SEBC students.

"There was zero per cent reservation for SEBC students in higher education during the previous BJD government's 24-year rule. This is the first time 11.25 per cent reservation has been provided. Those who denied this earlier have



no moral right to criticise the BJP government," Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj told reporters.

Asked why the reservation wasn't raised to the 27 per cent mark — as in other states — Suraj said, "There is a Supreme Court cap preventing states from exceeding 50 per cent caste-based reservation. After accounting for 38.75 per cent reserved for SCs and STs, the remaining 11.25 per cent has been allotted to SEBCs."

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also lauded the state BJP government for making reservation provision for SEBC students.

"SEBC students got reservation only after BJP was formed government in the state. We are committed to social justice," Pradhan said.

Echoing this sentiment, BJP

OBC Morcha president Surath Biswal blamed the BJD for neglecting SEBCs during its tenure.

"The BJD denied social justice for 24 years. In just 11 months, the BJP has introduced reservation for SEBC students. This shows our commitment to social justice in Odisha."

Meanwhile, the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das slammed the government's move as inadequate and announced statewide protests.

"We will hold demonstrations May 22 and 23 demanding 27 per cent reservation for SEBC students, as implemented in other states. Providing only 11.25 per cent when their population share is about 54 per cent is unacceptable," he said.

Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister Srikanth

Jena went a step further, calling the announcement a "cruel joke". "The BJP has excluded technical courses like medical, engineering and other professional education from quota for SEBC students," Jena pointed out, demanding reservation be made in proportion with the population ratio.

"The move is a complete betrayal of the 54 per cent OBC or SEBC students and youth. Although it is projected by the chief minister as a historic step, this decision offers no real benefit. As a result, OBC/SEBC students will continue to be denied any reservation — 0 per cent in technical and professional education," Jena said in a statement.

Senior BJD leader and former education minister Arun Kumar Sahoo said, "The government has made only 11.25 per cent reservation instead of 27 per cent. Therefore, it is half quota for SEBCs. The government has excluded engineering, medical and professional courses from the purview of quota for SEBC which is highly unfair," Sahoo said.

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Mystery shrouds death of woman in City hotel

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Mystery shrouded the death of a 26-year-old woman after she fell off the terrace of a hotel near Panchasakha Nagar in the early hours of Thursday under suspicious circumstances. The mishap occurred in the presence of the deceased woman's partner, within Khandagiri police station limits.

Khandagiri Police Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) Abhimanyu Das identified the deceased as Sonali Mohapatra, a native of Nayagarh district. She worked at a micro-financing firm in the City. Sonali spoke with her mother, Wednesday, informing the latter about her migraine.

Later, Sonali is guessed to have shared her ailing health condition with her mother. It



is learnt that during the call Sonali did not flag up any distressed condition.

Alleging a foulplay in the investigation, Sonali's moth-

er said the former was pushed from the hotel's terrace by her partner Bibhuti Pratihary over an argument. Last time during the call, Sonali

did not show any signs of distress. "Around 1am Thursday, Bibhuti called me, and informed Sonali is no more. Upon enquiry, Bibhuti said she slipped while she went to the roof to fetch water. Later, he hung up", her mother added.

Sources in the Khandagiri Police, said the couple has been staying in a live-in relationship for quite some time. Few months ago, they had taken the room on the hotel for rent at ₹20,000 per month. A purported video of the incident, which made round on the social media Wednesday, showed Bibhuti immediately rushing to the hotel's ground floor after the mishap.

Odisha may sue over 'dham' tag

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan Thursday said the state was mulling legal action over use of the title 'dham' for the recently inaugurated Jagannath temple in West Bengal's Digha.

Harichandan said discussions with legal experts are underway and a decision in this regard will be taken soon.

"The West Bengal government has not yet responded to our letter. We are examining legal options over use of the 'dham' tag for the Jagannath temple in Digha," he said.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had May 6 written a letter to his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee, requesting her to refrain from referring to the Jagannath temple in Digha as 'dham'. Banerjee had inaugurated the temple in Digha April



30 and described it as a 'Jagannath Dham', sparking a controversy in Odisha.

Though 10 days have passed since the CM wrote to Banerjee, "we are yet to receive any response", Harichandan said.

The Odisha government and two Shankaracharyas have maintained that only the 12th-century Jagannath temple in Puri can be called a 'dham'.

Earlier, the titular king of Puri, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, who is also the chairman of the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTMC) in Puri, had strongly objected to the use of the label 'dham' for the Digha temple.

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DISPROPORTIONATE ASSETS

ABDO under Vigilance glare



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Dharmasala, May 15: The Vigilance department Thursday unearthed disproportionate assets (DA) including four buildings, five plots, and deposits worth ₹65 lakh during a house search operation involving Asit Kumar Patra, Assistant Block Development Officer (ABDO) of Dharmasala block in Jajpur district.

On suspicion that the ABDO possesses assets disproportionate to his known sources of income, Vigilance teams launched search operations at seven places in Jajpur, Cuttack, Bhadrak and Khurda districts, a Vigilance official said. The state capital Bhubaneswar comes under Khurda district. During the raids, the department has so far found four multi-storeyed buildings

including a shopping complex, one flat, five high-value plots, 700 grams of gold, ₹65 lakh deposits, and ₹1.85 lakh in cash, the official said.

Besides, 2 two-wheelers and household articles worth over ₹3.27 lakh were also found during the search operations. Further investigation is under progress, he stated.

The ABDO is currently being questioned to determine the source of these assets. Further searches are underway, and additional assets are likely to be uncovered. The total valuation is expected to rise.

At least seven teams of Odisha Vigilance—comprising eight Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs), nine inspectors, and other supporting staff—carried out the searches based on warrants issued by the Court of the Special Judge, Vigilance, Cuttack.

Patra joined government service November 19, 1994, under a rehabilitation scheme, as a Gram Panchayat Extension Officer (GPEO) in the Panchayati Raj department.

He was promoted to ABDO in 2010 and posted to Rasulpur block in Jajpur district. On November 21, 2019, Patra was transferred to Dharmasala block, where he has been serving since.

Murder bid on mining officer by sand mafia

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, May 15: A junior mining officer had a close shave from the jaws of death after the driver of a sand laden tractor allegedly tried to ram into his official vehicle in a bid to kill him here in Balasore district late Wednesday night.

As a result of the collision, the vehicle veered off the road and plunged into a roadside drain. The incident occurred when junior mining officer Jeeendra Das along with constable Umakanta Singh was conducting a raid on excavation sites of unauthorised sand ghats in

Jaleswar region around 1am Wednesday.

Das promptly alerted the Jaleswar police. By 2:30am, Assistant Sub-Inspector Neelakantha Prusty arrived at the scene and seized both the sand-laden tractor and the officer's damaged vehicle, and transported the vehicles to the local police station. The mining officer later filed a written complaint with the Jaleswar police, accusing the tractor driver of attempted murder.

On the outskirts of Patharpura near Jail Road, Das encountered a sand-laden tractor bearing registration number

OD-01AG-2344. While trying to stop the vehicle, the driver allegedly rammmed the tractor into his Bolero, causing the officer's vehicle to fall into a drain. The driver then fled the scene abandoning the tractor. Police have launched an investigation, and further action is underway.

Sources said that the menace of illegal sand mining continues to escalate in Jaleswar area of Balasore district, putting government officials at increasing risk. Those involved in sand smuggling racket have grown so emboldened that they are reportedly attacking officials, at times attempting to run them

over with vehicles to prevent enforcement actions.

Further sources said that illegal sand transportation from the banks of the Subarnarekha River continues day and night despite enforcement efforts. Following repeated complaints, the district administration has directed intensified raids on unauthorised sand mining operations.

As part of the crackdown, the junior mining officer had also blocked access to parts of the river being used for illegal extraction. This action has reportedly angered the local sand mafia.

VIMSAR student gets 3-month suspension from hostel for ragging

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 15: A senior student of Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla in Sambalpur district has been suspended Thursday from the hostel for three months following his involvement in a ragging incident reported May 7.

The disciplinary action was taken by the institute's anti-ragging cell, which also issued a directive barring the student from residing in any hostel of VIMSAR during the suspension period.

The decision came after a meeting of the Anti-Ragging Committee held Thursday afternoon, chaired by VIMSAR Principal-cum-Dean Dr Pradip Kumar Mohanty. Other attendees included Prof Ashok Nayak, Prof Jayashree Dora, Prof LK Singh, a representative from a social outfit, and a member of a media organisation.

Neither the accused student nor his guardian was present at the meeting. The institute has formally informed them of the suspension through official communication.

It has come to light that a junior student had gone to Hostel No-7 for dinner May 7 night. During this time, he encountered a senior student. As the junior was leaving, the senior allegedly followed him and attempted to assault him with a knife.

Fortunately, friends of the junior student intervened and prevented the situation from escalating. Later that night, the junior student reported the incident to the authorities at VIMSAR.

Later, the student's father arrived at VIMSAR the next day and a formal written complaint was lodged with the institute's Anti-Ragging Cell.

In response, the Dean, immediately constituted a sub-committee to investigate the matter and submit a report. The committee members separately questioned the victim and the accused student and later submitted its findings to the VIMSAR authorities.

Based on the report, disciplinary action was taken against the senior student during a meeting of the Anti-Ragging Cell chaired by Dr Mohanty Thursday.



BUDDING FIGHTERS: Kids learn martial arts at a free self defence training camp organised by the Shaolin Kung Fu Wushu Association at Binakhandi at Judo hall in Sambalpur, Thursday

Denied mobile phone, Class IX boy hangs self

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, May 15: A Class IX student committed suicide by hanging at Balia area under Sahadevkhunta police limits of Balasore after his mother refused to give him mobile phone before tuition classes.

The deceased was identified as the youngest son of Tapan Kumar Giri in this district headquarters town.

The boy was reportedly watching something on his mobile phone when his mother intervened, asking him to stop and head to his tuition classes. She took the phone away and told him he would get it back once he returned. She then left for the market.

When she returned, she found her son hanging from the ceiling fan with a bedsheet tied to his neck in the room.

Family members and neighbours rushed him to the district headquarters hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead.

Sahadevkhunta police registered an unnatural death case (16/25) and sent the body for post-mortem. Further investigation is underway.

Residents divided over name change of Malkangiri villages



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, May 15: Resentment is brewing in parts of Malkangiri district over a move to rename villages originally designated as 'MV' (Malkangiri Village), with members of the Bengali community expressing frustration and intellectuals calling for government intervention.

For more than 50 years, these villages have been home to refugees from Bangladesh, who were displaced during the post-Partition period and resettled in Odisha by the state government. Each family was allotted land and housing, and the villages were named sequentially as MV-1 through MV-200. The later settlements housing the next batch of refugees were named MPV (Malkangiri Potteru Village) starting from MPV-1 and beyond, covering more than 30 villages.

Over 50 years on, these settlements have retained

their numerical designations instead of being renamed or granted official revenue village status. The Bengali community has repeatedly petitioned the state government to assign formal names and recognise those as revenue villages. The government had promised to address the issue but had not followed through. Recently, the state government issued directives to conduct gram sabhas (village assemblies) in every panchayat of the district to approve the proposed name changes. However, resistance has emerged during these assemblies, with members of 14 tribal communities opposing the move. As a result, several gram sabhas have rejected the proposals.

Tension has been reported in multiple areas, with confrontations between the opposing groups during these gram sabhas. On Thursday, the proposals were struck down in Udupa, Serapalli, Padmagiri, and Gorakhunta panchayats, leading to dissatisfaction and unrest among the Bengali residents.

In response to the growing unrest, intellectual circles are calling on the state government to step in and find a resolution that balances the concerns of all communities involved.

Utkal Alumina empowers women of displaced families

Rayagada: Utkal Alumina, a subsidiary of Hindalco Industries under the Aditya Birla Group, Wednesday inaugurated a phenyl production training centre at Nuapada near Tikiri in Rayagada district. The facility was inaugurated in the presence of the company's BH Saurabh Khedekar, Cluster Head of Human Resources Dr Krishna Padhi, and Unit Head Rabi Narayan Mishra. As part of its commitment to community development, Utkal Alumina has set up this phenyl production unit to empower 74 women members from displaced families residing in the R&R-1 colony, by equipping them with skills for financial self-reliance. In the first phase, all women from these families are being provided necessary support facilities and practical training in phenyl production. Additionally, arrangements are being made to help market and sell the produced phenyl in local markets, ensuring a sustainable income stream for the women. To facilitate this initiative, raw materials and trainer Santosh Kumar Nanda have been appointed for the training purpose. There has been a noticeable enthusiasm among the women of the R&R colony for this training program. With active participation, the aim is to produce over 100 liters of phenyl daily. Local residents have welcomed and appreciated this effort by the company to promote self-reliance amongst women. The event was attended by Bhaskar Banerjee (Head of Finance), Bijay Kumara (Head of Human Resources), Lopamudra Mishra (Head of CSR), Kiran Nayak (Head of IR), and Pitambar Behera (General Manager, Corporate Affairs & Public Relations). The programme was conducted under the guidance of Belakar Nayak, SH of the R&R department, with the support of other departmental staff.



Man along with 2 kids dies by consuming poisoned biryani

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, May 15: A 40-year-old man and his two children allegedly killed themselves by consuming poisoned biryani in Gajapati district, police said Thursday.

The incident happened at Odia Parala Street in the district headquarters town of Paralakhemundi Wednesday afternoon, they said.

The man's wife had died by suicide by consuming poison March 21, they added.

The man and his two children were found in an unconscious state by neighbours, following which they called the police.

Police took the man, his seven-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter to the Paralakhemundi Hospital. The son died there during treatment, while the man and his daughter were shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur, where they breathed their last Thursday morning.

The biryani, which they had consumed before their death, was sent for forensic tests, said Prasant Bhupati, the Inspector-in-Charge of the Paralakhemundi police station.

Already depressed by the death of his wife, he also suffered losses in business recently, they said.

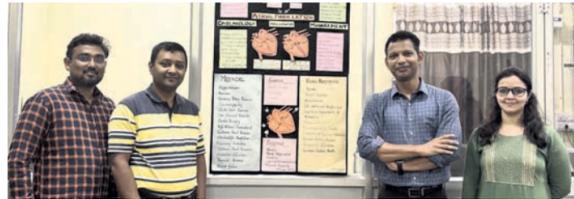
NITR designs breakthrough upgrade to ECG

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 15: Researchers at the National Institute of Technology, Rourkela (NITR) have developed a breakthrough enhancement to electrocardiography (ECG), one of the most widely used techniques for monitoring heart activity. The new system enables clearer detection of subtle electrical signals from the heart's upper chambers — signals that are often difficult to identify in standard ECG readings.

These signals, specifically the P-waves, are crucial for diagnosing abnormal heart rhythms such as atrial fibrillation, a condition that can significantly increase the risk of stroke. Atrial arrhythmias — irregular heart rhythms originating in the atria — are among the most common types of arrhythmia, particularly in hospitalised patients. Early detection is essential to initiate timely treatment and prevent complications.

"P-waves are typically faint and often obscured by electrical noise or stronger signals from other heart regions," said Dr J Sivaraman, lead researcher and



assistant professor in the Department of Biotechnology and Medical Engineering at NIT Rourkela. "We introduced novel electrode placements that significantly increase the visibility of atrial activity in ECG readings. The improved signal clarity allows for quicker analysis and better clinical decision-making."

The research team developed a novel electrode configuration known as the Atrial Lead System (ALS). In ECG diagnostics, "leads" refer to specific configurations of electrodes placed on the body to record the heart's electrical activity. The ALS uses a modified lead arrangement to enhance atrial signal capture, especially improving the clarity of the P-wave. This innovation not only aids clinicians but also

improves the performance of computer-based diagnostic tools.

One of the most significant benefits of this system is that it does not require any modification to existing ECG machines. The innovation lies solely in how the electrodes are positioned, making it highly accessible for both public and private healthcare facilities without additional cost.

Dr R Pradeep Kumar, senior interventional cardiologist at MIOT International, Chennai, emphasised the clinical importance of the system: "A clearly appreciated P-wave in the ECG provides vital clues in diagnosing atrial pathologies. To distinguish atrial fibrillation from other supraventricular arrhythmias, the morphology of the P-wave must be clearly interpreted."

The research team included Dr J Sivaraman, Dr N Bala Chakravarthy and Prof Kunal Pal, along with research scholars Prasanna Venkatesh and Arya Bhardwaj, all from NIT Rourkela. Clinical validation and collaboration were provided by Dr Pradeep Kumar, also a visiting consultant at Jaiprakash Hospital and Research Centre, Rourkela.

Their findings have been published in international journals including Biomedical Signal Processing & Control, Medical Hypotheses, and Physical & Engineering Sciences in Medicine. A patent application for the Atrial Lead System (Application No. 202431094709) has also been filed. The project is supported by funding from the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), Government of India.

This collaborative achievement by NIT Rourkela, MIOT International, Chennai, and Jaiprakash Hospital, Rourkela, reflects the power of academia-clinical synergy and represents a major step forward in improving cardiac diagnostics and patient care in India and globally.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

01 - Tender Notice No. 05-SBP-TRD-OT-2025-26, Date : 07.05.2025

NAME OF WORK : PROVISION OF SEPARATE FEEDER LINE TO IMPROVE RELIABILITY TO TRACTION SUPPLY SYSTEM FOR SIDING LINE OF ORDINANCE FACTORY AT BADMAL IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost (₹) : 86,54,092.60, **EMD (₹) :** 1,73,100.00,

02 - Tender Notice No. 06-SBP-TRD-OT-2025-26, Date : 08.05.2025

NAME OF WORK : TRD RELATED WORK FOR "PROVISION OF S/NECK OF 80M ON R/4 AT SAMBALPUR END AND PROVISION OF 120M ORL AT BOOTH END OF R/5 OF RENGALI STATION.

Approximate Cost (₹) : 69,52,589.22, **EMD (₹) :** 1,39,100.00,

Completion Period : 12 Months (For both the tenders).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1530 Hrs. of 29.05.2025 (For Sl. 01) & At 1530 Hrs. of 30.05.2025 (For Sl. 02)

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person 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 considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenders are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Sambalpur
PR-130/Q25-26

PUBLIC NOTICE BRANCH OFFICE CLOSING

Bajaj Finance Limited having its Registered Office, Mumbai- Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411 035 and corporate office on 4th Floor, Bajaj Finserv House, Viman Nagar, Off Pune - Ahmednagar Road, Pune, Maharashtra 411 014 hereby informs its customers and concerned that its office located at (Bajaj Finance Limited, Panda Complex, Daily Market, Burla - 768017) will be closing with effect from 13th September-2025. For better customer facility all the existing services shall continue to be available at the branch shifted to (Bajaj Finance Limited, 3rd floor, Above Reliance Jewelers, Budharaja Main Road, Sambalpur - 768004). All customers and concerned are requested to take a note of change of address and requested to contact our office at (Bajaj Finance Limited, 3rd floor, Above Reliance Jewelers, Budharaja Main Road, Sambalpur - 768004) thereafter.

Bajaj Finance Limited
4th Floor, Bajaj Finserv House,
Viman Nagar, Off Pune - Ahmednagar Road,
Pune - 411 014 Maharashtra
Tel - 020 - 71505050

Date-15.05.2025

IndianOil

CIN - L23201MH1959GOI011388

Important Notice for PUBLIC

Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. is one of the largest pipeline transportation companies in India and operates in most of the states of the country. Our pipelines transport natural gas, crude oil and other petroleum products. We monitor our operations 24x7 through regular testing, right-of-way aerial and foot patrols, etc.

This is to inform that Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Balasore pipeline office plans to carry out drone surveillance of pipeline RoW from date 16.05.2025 to 16.06.2026 of its oil and gas pipelines in Bhadrak and Balasore district of Odisha. This initiative aims to prevent unauthorized digging, pilferage, or damage to our pipelines.

Please note the following:

- IndianOil Pipelines has deployed these drones for the safety and security of oil pipelines and prevent thefts.
- Do not panic if you see drones flying over the pipelines right-of-way (RoW).
- These drones shall fly inside the IndianOil pipelines RoW only.
- These drones are part of a security measure to ensure the safety and integrity of the pipelines.
- The drones will operate within legal guidelines and will not intrude on personal spaces.
- For accurate information about the drone surveillance, you can contact IndianOil's toll-free number under Odisha sector-18003456912.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that, Biranjan Samal S/o. Late Biranchi Samal, At-Parjanga, Po-Parjanga, PS- Parjanga, Dist- Dhenkanal, has sworn an affidavit on dt. 06.05.2025 and has reported to IIC, Town PS, Angul on dt. 07.05.2025 regarding loss of original link Regd Sale Deed No.580/1992, Vol-9 dt. 13.05.1992 of Registering Officer Parjanga and original link Regd Sale Deed No.468/2010, Vol-29 dt. 06.08.2010 of Registering Officer, Parjanga, Biranjan Samal, S/o. Late Biranchi Samal has applied to the LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD, Angul to avail loan on the above property by mortgaging the said property documents. All concerned therefore, having any claim over the property purchased under the said document Regd Sale Deed No.580/1992, Vol-9 dt. 13.05.1992 of Registering Officer Parjanga and Regd Sale Deed No.468/2010, Vol-29 dt. 06.08.2010 of Registering Officer, Parjanga, is required to file his claim with the undersigned within 15(Fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice failing which it will be presumed that, the property having link with the said document/s is/are free from encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as a mortgagor and the company as the mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15(Fifteen) days of publication of this notice.

(Bikram Keshari Pattanai) Advocate,
LIC Housing Finance Ltd. At-House No-13,
Dinabandhu Villa, Mausima Chhak,
Bhubaneswar, Khordha. Mobile No.9337395558.

Angul
Dt.15.05.2025

Yoga is the union of that which has become separated in the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality.

SRI AUROBINDO



Trump in Mideast

As Donald Trump parades through the Middle East this week, he will encounter a very different region than the one he experienced during his first term. True, the Israeli-Palestinian problem remains unresolved, as do the challenges emanating from Iran's much-advanced nuclear programme and the instability and dysfunction in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

But this old wine is now packaged in new bottles. Beyond the garish headlines of Trump's plan to accept a Boeing 747 as a gift from Qatar, new trends are emerging that will redefine the region, posing additional challenges for US policy.

Of all the changes in the Middle East since Hamas' 7 October, 2023, attack on Israel, perhaps the most striking is Israel's emergence as a regional powerhouse. Aided by the administrations of former President Joe Biden and Trump, and enabled by Arab regimes that do little to support Palestinians, Israel devastated Hamas and Hezbollah as military organisations, killing much of their senior leadership. With the support of the United States, Europe, and friendly Arab states, it effectively countered two direct Iranian missile attacks on its territory.

Israel then delivered its own strike, reportedly destroying much of Iran's ballistic missile production and air defences. In short, Israel has achieved escalation dominance: the capacity to escalate (or not) as it sees fit, and to deter its adversaries from doing so. Israel has also redefined its concept of border security in Gaza, Lebanon, the West Bank, and Syria by acting unilaterally to preempt and prevent threats to its territory.

Converting Israel's military power into political arrangements, even peace accords, would seem like a reasonable next step. But the right-wing government of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu seems uninterested in such options and is unlikely to be induced to change its outlook. Moreover, securing new, lasting agreements also depends on whether there are leaders among the Palestinians and key Arab states ready to take up the challenge, with all the political risks it entails.

But the Arab world remains in serious disarray. At least five Arab states are dealing with profound internal challenges, leaving them in various degrees of dysfunction and state failure. Amid this power vacuum, two alternative power centres have emerged. The first are the states of the Persian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. Relatively unscathed by the Arab Spring and blessed with sovereign wealth funds, oil, and natural gas, these stable authoritarian powers, particularly Saudi Arabia, have begun to play an outsized role in the region.

The second category comprises non-Arab states. Israel, Turkey, and Iran are the only states in the region with the capacity to project military power beyond their borders. While each has suffered periods of internal unrest, they have ultimately maintained domestic stability. Each also boasts tremendous economic potential and significant security, military, and intelligence capabilities, including the capability to manufacture its own weapons.

One (Israel) is America's closest regional ally, another (Turkey) is a member of NATO and a newfound power broker in Syria, and the third (Iran) retains considerable influence despite Israel's mauling of its proxies Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran's nuclear programme keeps it relevant, even central, to both Israeli and American policymaking.

All three non-Arab states engender a good deal of suspicion and mistrust among Arab regimes but are nonetheless seen as key players whom no one wants to offend. All three are at odds – with each frustrating the others' regional objectives – and all three are here to stay. Their influence will most likely only grow in the years to come, given the fractiousness of the Arab world.

In the immediate aftermath of the 7 October Hamas attack, it seemed that the Palestinian issue was once again front and centre, not just in the Arab world, but internationally. Those who claimed it had lost its resonance could point to the outpouring of sympathy and support for Gazan civilians as Israel's war against Hamas led to a humanitarian catastrophe.

Moreover, the United Nations passed resolutions calling for an end to the war, many around the world condemned the war and Israel, the International Court of Justice took up the question of whether Israel is committing genocide, and the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu (as well as for Hamas's military commander, later found to have been killed).

Nonetheless, it has become stunningly clear that, far from pushing the Palestinian issue to the top of the international agenda, the 7 October attack has actually diminished its salience and left Palestinians divided, isolated, and without good options. Continued US support for Israel's war against Hamas, despite the exponential rise of Palestinian deaths, has protected Israel from negative consequences; key Arab regimes have done next to nothing to impose costs and consequences on Israel and the US as Palestinian civilian deaths mount. The international community appears too fragmented, distracted, and self-interested to act in any concerted way in defence of Palestine.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian national movement remains divided and dysfunctional, giving Palestinians an unpalatable choice between Hamas and the aging president of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas. The prospects for anything resembling a two-state solution have never looked bleaker.

How the Trump administration will process these developments remains to be seen. Clearly, it has adopted a pro-Israel view, with Trump musing about turning Gaza into a Riviera-style resort. He has deployed his special envoy to the Middle East to secure the return of the hostages, but has yet to invest in any postwar plan for the beleaguered enclave. Indeed, he has left the strategy for Gaza to Israel, which in turn has resumed its military campaign there. Trump has also acquiesced to Israel's pursuit of aggressive border defences vis-à-vis both Lebanon and Syria, while enabling Israel's annexationist policies in the West Bank.

Yet Trump is nothing if not unpredictable. He announced new US negotiations with Iran in the presence of Netanyahu, who himself has tried to persuade the president that the only solution to Iran's nuclear programme is military action. But if US-Iranian negotiations do advance, or if Trump's interest in Israeli-Saudi normalisation intensifies, he may find himself drawn into the Middle East negotiating bazaar, dealing with the intricacies of day-after planning in Gaza and a political horizon for Palestinians.

These paths are already fomenting tension between Trump, who will not be visiting Israel on his Middle East trip, and a recalcitrant Netanyahu. But given Trump's absolute control over his party, Netanyahu will have fewer options to appeal to Republicans if the White House proposes policies that he opposes. As most US allies have already learned, if Trump wants something, he's not adverse to using pressure to get it.

Aaron David Miller is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Lauren Morganbesser is a junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Aaron David Miller & Lauren Morganbesser

The Arab world remains in serious disarray. At least five Arab states are dealing with profound internal challenges, leaving them in various degrees of dysfunction and state failure

PLASTIC IN THE OCEAN

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

The problem of maritime plastic-waste pollution first became apparent in the 1970s.

In the half-century since then, the problem has become ever more widespread, as scientific expeditions conducted by the Tara Ocean Foundation (of which I am executive director) have shown.

Large pieces of debris, such as fishing nets, and their disastrous effects on marine life, are the most visible symptom. Such waste is estimated to kill more than one million seabirds and over 100,000 marine mammals annually, often through entanglement or suffocation, and promotes transport of invasive species, triggering a cascading effect on the ecosystems in which they play a central role.

Less visible, but more pervasive, are microplastics, which have been found in the deepest ocean trenches and all types of marine life. Microplastics can, among other things, modify bacterial and viral communities and disperse chemical toxins in food chains. Some of these toxins, such as phthalates, are associated with the chemistry of plastics, while others, such as pesticides and heavy metals, are absorbed by the plastic before it reaches the ocean and enters the food chain.

How these toxic substances interact with plastics has been the subject of much study. Plastic is comprised of monomers that have been chemically bonded to form long chains of polymers – ethylene, styrene, and propylene become polyethylene, polystyrene, and polypropylene. But the process of polymerization is often imperfect, and some of the unpolymerized monomers that remain in plastic, like different types of styrene and bisphenol, pose major environmental and health risks.

Moreover, other chemical additives, including plasticizers, fillers, colorants, flame



Ignoring or even denying the economic reality of the current ecological emergency would be to shut one's eyes to the close dependence of human activities on a stable and favourable environment

retardants, and antioxidants, are incorporated into polymer formulations to modify their properties. And non-intentionally added substances (NIAS) – impurities, raw materials used in manufacturing, byproducts, and degradation products – bind to finished plastics.

In most cases, because free monomers, additives, and NIAS are simply trapped within the tangle of polymer chains, rather than being chemically bound to them, they are more likely to leach out during the production, use, and disposal of plastic, migrating into liquids, gases, and solids. Some 16,000 such molecules have been identified, but their effects are still not fully known, nor is their toxicity, which can change depending on how they are combined. What we do know is that one-quarter of these 16,000 molecules are pose a hazard to human health or the environment by disrupting biochemical processes in living organisms.

Halting the flow of microplastics and toxic pollutants into the world's bodies of water is a Sisyphean task. Nevertheless, scientists are trying to stem the problem. For example, the Tara Europa expedition, in coordination with the

European Molecular Biology Laboratory and more than 70 scientific institutions across the continent, has spent the past two years investigating how these hazardous substances make their way into the seas and oceans bordering Europe. The mission plans to share its findings soon.

But the generation of toxic waste and debris is not the only way that plastic can harm ocean health. The plastics industry has been a major driver of climate change, accounting for an estimated 3.4% of global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. Plastic production is on track to contribute 15% of GHG emissions by 2050, exacerbating global warming and thereby increasing the threats to marine life, which is sensitive to rising water temperatures.

Because plastic degrades the entire biosphere, not just the ocean, it is not a waste problem that can be solved by a few sustainability-minded citizens' recycling efforts. This is a systemic crisis that requires an economy-wide solution. A better approach is to understand plastic as one of the "new entities" that must not leak into the environment, a view initially formulated by the Stockholm Resilience Centre in its work on planetary boundaries and

later endorsed by the United Nations. While acknowledging the impossibility of defining a precise threshold for harm, such an approach highlights the need for a drastic reduction in plastic use.

Research suggests that it would be economically feasible to halve global plastic production at a cost which would almost surely be less than the cost of inaction. But, according to a recent study by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, even this reduction would not be enough to limit global warming to 1.5°C Celsius above preindustrial levels, the target set by the Paris climate agreement. Instead, they found that meeting this goal would require a 75% reduction in plastic production compared to 2015, when the agreement was adopted.

Addressing this global crisis with the necessary urgency will require mobilizing investment and support to reduce the production of single-use plastics, increase the lifespan of plastic objects through regulation, and promote reuse and reparability. While it is tempting to lean on short-term fixes, such as replacing plastic packaging with other disposable materials like paper, cardboard, aluminum, steel, and glass, the goal must not be merely to mitigate the symptoms of the underlying ailment.

Our economies are on the cusp of upheaval as the need for a habitable and healthy planet becomes inescapable. Ignoring or even denying the economic reality of the current ecological emergency would be to shut one's eyes to the close dependence of human activities on a stable and favourable environment. Working with, rather than against, nature requires a paradigm shift, and it starts with plastics.

The writer is Executive Director of the Tara Ocean Foundation. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Romain Troublé

HALTING THE FLOW OF MICROPLASTICS AND TOXIC POLLUTANTS INTO THE WORLD'S BODIES OF WATER IS A SISYPHEAN TASK

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Going beyond reclaiming space

Women reclaiming space is a powerful movement that's gaining impetus globally. In a powerful and inspiring speech recently at the release of a book titled "Women Laws from the Womb to the Tomb: Rights and Remedies," Justice Nagarathna challenged the belief that women are entering male-dominated spaces, stating instead that they are reclaiming spaces from which they were unfairly excluded for generations due to misogynistic norms and patriarchal discrimination.

She emphasised that women's growing presence in law, governance, and corporate sectors should not be seen as an intrusion. Every woman stepping into a courtroom, legislature or boardroom today isn't expanding her boundaries, rather she is reclaiming her fair share of this nation's intellectual and institutional legacy. Supreme Court judge Justice KV Viswanathan, who also spoke at the event, said the presence of women in erstwhile male bastions conferred enormous benefit on humanity as a whole.

The World Bank Group recognises the significance

of women reclaiming space and achieving full economic participation as crucial for sustainable development and global prosperity. The bank's Gender Strategy 2024-2030 aims to address gender inequality and empower women by eliminating barriers to economic opportunity, promoting leadership, and building foundational well-being.

The IMF recognises the critical importance of women's economic empowerment and has dedicated resources and research efforts to address gender inequality. The IMF's work in this area focuses on encouraging women's participation in workforce, reducing gender gaps in access to education, finance, and leadership, and integrating gender perspectives into economic policies.

While women are increasingly reclaiming spaces and opportunities in public domains previously denied to them, this progress may not fully translate into a fundamental change in the quality of life or societal structures that impact women. This means, women have reclaimed some of their spaces but not lives. Women had to struggle in a predominantly "man-made"

environment, both within and outside home. They may still be inhibited by societal expectations, gender norms, and perpetual inequality in areas like economic, freedom, personal safety and leisure.

Women have historically been denied access to education, leadership roles, and financial freedom. From reproductive rights to beauty standards, patriarchal systems have sought to control and dictate women's autonomy. Gender-based violence has often been perpetrated through systemic violence, including witch hunts, honour killings, and workplace discrimination. Women are often socialised to prioritise others over themselves, leading to burnout and emotional suppression.

According to Times USE Survey (TUS), 2024 recently released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, women in India spent 289 minutes per day in 2024 on unpaid domestic work as against 88 minutes spent by men on the same. Men and women also spent 75 minutes and 137 minutes respectively on unpaid care giving services.

Even though Indian judiciary has made strides in-

clusivity at the entry level, it continues to struggle with gender parity in its higher echelons. According to the Supreme Court's "State of Judiciary" report (2023), women make up only 4% of High Court judges and just 9.3% of Supreme Court judges. Alarmingly, some states have either no women judges or just one in their High Courts, reflecting a serious imbalance. The World Bank's "Women, Business, and the Law" index measures the legal gender gap, indicating how far women's legal rights differ from men's. In 2024, the report showed that women globally have approximately two-thirds (64.2%) of legal rights granted to men. India specifically ranked 113 out of 190 countries, with women enjoying 60% of legal rights of men.

However, reclaiming space is only one aspect of achieving true gender equality. It's crucial to address the broader issues of power, privilege, and systemic inequalities and discrimination that affect women's lives.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

RECLAIMING SPACE IS ONLY ONE ASPECT OF ACHIEVING TRUE GENDER EQUALITY

Huge vacuum to fill

Sir, King Kohli has finally hung up his Test boots. The man who once walked in as a rookie with spiky hair and raw nerves, walks out as a legend who gave Indian Test cricket a new lease of life by infusing fresh energy and dynamism. Kohli demanded, and helped create a formidable pace pool in his single-minded pursuit to turn India into a team capable of winning Tests anywhere in the world. He revolutionised the fitness culture in the India dressing room, turning a somewhat lax fielding side into a crack squad of electric-heel fielders. The silky-smooth batting, the wild celebrations and a penchant to get under an opponent's skin - Kohli has often been at the centre of an unfolding drama, which injected fresh life into a fan's often-dreary experience of watching Test cricket. The whites may no longer bear Kohli's name, but Test cricket will forever bear his soul. Test cricket bows to one of its fiercest warriors, who gave his heart and soul to the game for 14 years. A feeling of melancholy has suddenly gripped Indian Test cricket after the vacuum created by the Hitman and the King within days.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Superior weaponry

Sir, Although India's military offensive has been halted, the nation remains on high alert due to frequent and unpredictable ceasefire violations by Pakistan. The widespread deployment of advanced drone jammers at key locations reflects the new norm: every unidentified drone is treated as a potential threat. On-ground discoveries of unexploded Chinese-made P-15 missiles and artillery shells have exposed the unreliability of Chinese arms, weakening China's position as the world's largest weapons supplier. In contrast, India's indigenous weapons have demonstrated exceptional performance. Systems like the Nagastra-1 loitering munition with a 30 km range, the Akash air defence system, and the versatile BrahMos missiles have proven their effectiveness in real-time scenarios. Their success has prompted nations like Armenia and the Philippines to procure these Indian-made weapons, boosting India's defence exports.

RS Narula, PATIALA

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, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

BORDER VILLAGES OF PUNJAB

Normalcy returns

India and Pakistan arrived at the agreement to halt military actions after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes



Where people are so united with the forces and the administration, no enemy can ever dare to cross the border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ferozepur/Fazilka, May 15: Life in the villages situated along the India-Pakistan border in Punjab is returning to normal, with villagers coming back to their homes that they had left behind for safer places following tensions between India and Pakistan.

After the two neighbouring countries arrived at an agreement May 10 to halt military actions, the residents of the border villages in Ferozepur district started coming back.

Malkeet Singh of Jallo Ke village in Ferozepur, situated at a stone's throw from the International Border, said, "People are coming back and it feels like life is returning to normal, step by step."

Reflecting on the tense days of the conflict, he said, "The first few days were terrifying. We heard strange sounds at night and the fear of the unknown kept us all awake. But slowly, things are beginning to settle down."

Several residents of the border villages, including Gatti Rajoke, Tendiwala, Kalluwala, Nayi Gatti Rajoke, Jallo and Rahime Ke Gatti, had left for safer places when the tensions between the two countries escalated.

Tara Singh (40) from Nayi Gatti Rajoke talked about the painful reality of leaving everything behind. "After the tensions soared, most of the people left. It was not easy. Some spent thousands of rupees to bring their belongings to safety," he said.

For Gurjeet Kaur (52), the decision to stay back in the village was not easy, but it was one

that she does not regret.

"No one asked me to leave and I chose to stay. Some people went to stay with their relatives, but we had faith in the soldiers," she said.

Sixteen-year-old Jaswinder Singh from Tendiwala said his family did not leave the village as they knew that they were safe because of the security forces. "I feel proud of them for protecting us," he said.

The residents of the border villages in Fazilka extended their heartfelt gratitude to the Army. Unlike previous instances, there was no need for evacuation orders this time, a testament to the preparedness and capabilities of the armed forces, officials said.

Babbu Singh from Jodha Bheni village, situated right along the zero line, said, "We had complete faith in our Army. We stood firm in our village. With our forces at the border, there was no fear. The administration also kept us well-informed with timely guidance."

During the escalation of the conflict, a Pakistani drone that attempted to breach the border near Fazilka was intercepted by the Army, preventing any damage. Recalling the 1971 war, locals proudly highlighted how the brave soldiers sacrificed their lives to protect Fazilka.

In their honour, a war memorial was established in Asafwala, which continues to be a site of reverence and respect, they said.

Sanjay Kumar from Khanwala village, just a kilometre from the Pakistan border, said, "When the Army is present, it boosts our confidence. Like every Indian, we take pride in our armed forces. Their presence allows us to sleep peacefully at night."

The same patriotic spirit was seen among the residents of Pakka Chishti village, who gathered in solidarity and said, "As long as the Army stands guard, we are safe."

SCHOOLS REOPEN

Schools in five Punjab districts bordering Pakistan reopened on Wednesday, six days after they were ordered to close in view of the military standoff between India and Pakistan, officials said.

The state government May 8 ordered the closure of academic institutions for three days as a military standoff between India and Pakistan soared. While schools in most districts reopened Monday, they remained shut in the six border districts. Punjab shares a 553-kilometre border with Pakistan, spanning the districts of Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Pathankot, Fazilka, Ferozepur and Gurdaspur. While schools in Gurdaspur reopened Tuesday, those in the other five border districts followed suit Wednesday. "We are reopening school today as per the government guidelines," said a teacher at Sri Guru Harkrishan Public School, at Attari in Amritsar. The Amritsar district administration Tuesday said schools would remain open from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm. In Pathankot, a teacher said student attendance was at 80 per cent on the first day after reopening of schools. "We appeal to all parents to send their children to school," said the teacher. The situation continued to remain normal in border areas in Punjab with markets teeming with people and schools reopening.



Locals and BJP supporters take part in a 'Tiranga Rally' to celebrate the success of 'Operation Sindoor' and to express solidarity with the armed forces, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Thursday

Bird flu scare grips UP; all zoos shut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 15: All zoos in Uttar Pradesh and the Lion Safari in the state's Etawah district have been closed to visitors for a week after bird flu was detected in a tigress that died at a zoo in Gorakhpur, officials said Wednesday.

While authorities have directed enhanced surveillance across zoos and poultry farms, a team formed by the Central Zoo Authority will investigate the impact of avian influenza at the Gorakhpur zoo and submit its report in 15 days, they said.

The zoo shutdown - effective from May 14 to May 20 - was ordered in line with directives issued during a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Tuesday.

Principal Chief Forest Conservator (Wildlife) Anuradha Vemuri said that in light of the confirmed presence of bird flu case at the Shaheed Ashfaq Ullah Khan Zoological Park, the Wildlife Department has swiftly closed all zoos in Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Kanpur and the Lion Safari in Etawah to tourists.

Health safety measures for wild animals are being rigorously followed to contain the



spread of the disease, the official said.

The Central Zoo Authority has formed a five-member team of veterinary doctors and pathologists to investigate the impact of avian influenza at the Gorakhpur zoo, Vemuri said.

The team includes representatives from the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairy, Wildlife Health Management Department, Wildlife Institute of India (Dehradun), ICAR Bareilly and Bhopal, and pathologists.

Once the investigation is complete, a report will be submitted within 15 days, and based on the findings, the future course of action for the zoos and safari parks in the state will be determined, she said.

Vemuri said, "A special mon-

itoring system and stringent health safety protocols are being rigorously enforced across all zoos in the state, including those in Lucknow, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, and the Etawah Safari Park.

"All Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) have been directed to conduct regular health checkups for animals and to immediately report any signs of irregularities. Moreover, wild animals are now being fed only after routine health assessments to ensure their well-being," she said.

At a meeting Tuesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had given a slew of directions to officials, asking them to act promptly as per the guidelines of the central and state governments. He instructed that all zoo

premises should be regularly sanitised, animals must have frequent health checks and food and water sources for animals should be thoroughly tested.

The forest and health departments remain on high alert, with zoo and safari staff instructed to use protective gear including masks, gloves and PPE kits while on duty.

All animals across the facilities are being monitored closely for symptoms and enhanced sanitation and infection control protocols have been put in place.

Forest Minister Saxena confirmed that bird flu was detected in the tigress that died in Gorakhpur.

"Lab reports have confirmed bird flu in the tigress. As a result, surveillance has been intensified not just in zoos, but also in poultry farms across the state. Staff have been directed to follow strict biosecurity measures," Saxena said.

Bird flu, or avian influenza, is a contagious viral disease that primarily affects birds, but in rare instances, can spread to mammals and even humans if the virus mutates. It is generally transmitted through contact with infected birds or contaminated surfaces.

Ayodhya couple name their May 7 born son 'Sindoor'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ayodhya (UP), May 15: Amid a surge in national pride following India's decisive military response to the Pahalgal terror attack, a couple in Ayodhya have named their newborn son Sindoor after the Indian military's successful Operation Sindoor against terror hubs in Pakistan.

Soni Kanojia, a resident of Palia Shahbadi village under the Cantonment Police Station, gave birth to the baby boy May 7 at the district hospital. Inspired by the bravery of the Indian armed forces, she and her husband Rahul Kanojia

chose to name their son after Operation Sindoor.

Operation Sindoor, launched May 7, was India's swift retaliatory strike targeting nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK). The mission followed the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgal, where 25 tourists and a local were killed in a brutal ambush at Baisaran meadow in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Meera Gautam, a staff nurse at the Ayushman Ward of the district hospital, confirmed that five babies were born May 7 including Kanojias' who chose to name their child after the operation.

HOOCH TRAGEDY Punjab asks Centre to regulate methanol use

At least 23 people, who consumed spurious liquor, died in Majitha town of Amritsar Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, May 15: Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema Wednesday asked the Centre to take immediate steps to regulate the use of methyl alcohol or methanol under the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act.

Cheema has written a letter to Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal after 23 people, who consumed spurious liquor, died in Majitha

town of Amritsar.

An official statement said the minister's request comes in the wake of repeated hooch tragedies across the country, resulting in the loss of innocent lives due to the unregulated use of highly toxic industrial chemical, methyl alcohol.

Highlighting the incidents of mass casualties caused by the consumption of spurious liquor linked to the clandestine use of methanol, Cheema underscored the "serious" regulatory vacuum. He said the physical appearance, odour, and sedative properties of methanol closely resemble those of ethyl alcohol, making it a silent killer when diverted into the illicit liquor



supply chain.

Methanol is a light, colourless organic chemical compound which is poisonous when ingested and is illegally added to alcoholic beverages as a cheaper alternative to ethanol, which is the normal consumable alcohol.

Cheema pointed out that despite the Central government's powers to regulate industrial alcohol under the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951, methanol continues to fall into a grey area, leading to systematic failures in monitoring and compliance.

He stressed that the present legal framework does not sufficiently address the supply chain vulnerabilities of this substance, nor does it mandate tracking mechanisms, registration of buyers, or cross-state regulation.

Cheema urged the Centre to treat the regulation of methanol as a matter of national interest, demanding centralised, legally enforceable action.

Fake drugs worth over ₹30 crore seized in UP in past one year: FSDA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 15: The Uttar Pradesh Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA) has seized counterfeit medicines worth Rs 30.77 crore over the past one year as part of a statewide crackdown on the illegal drug trade, an official statement issued here Thursday said.

The department carried out 1,039 raids across the state and collected 13,848 samples during this period. Based on findings, licences of 1,166 drug dealers were cancelled and 68 people were arrested, the statement said.

Major operations were conducted in Lucknow, Agra and Ghaziabad, where apart from counterfeit drugs, authorities also seized oxytocin injections, narcotic substances and fake cosmetic products.

The department inspected 463 drug manufacturing units, 647 blood banks and 10,462 retail drug establishments over the year. Laboratory tests confirmed 96 samples as fake and 497 as substandard, prompting further action, it said.

In Lucknow, several important raids were carried out with the help of the Special Task Force (STF), targeting counterfeit drugs and oxytocin.

In Agra, fake medicines worth Rs 1.36 crore were seized November 5, 2024. In Ghaziabad, narcotics valued at Rs 90 lakh were recovered February 6, 2025.

Counterfeit cosmetic products worth Rs 50 lakh were also seized in Bareilly in April 2025. Investigations are underway into 14 samples suspected of containing adulterated allopathic medicines disguised as Ayurvedic products.

Rare long-snouted vine snake rediscovered in DTR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lakhimpur Kheri, May 15: A brown morph, long-snouted vine snake, Ahaetulla longirostris, was discovered in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, in a landmark herpetological breakthrough, officials said Thursday.

This rare and cryptic species was sighted and photographed alive in the grassland of Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary on Monday, officials said.

"The discovery marked the second live record of this species from Uttar Pradesh, following its initial sighting during the 2024 rhino translocation initiative in the South Sonaripur range, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve Division, Palia Kheri," said Dudhwa biologist Vipin Kapoor Sainy.

marked the second live record of this species from Uttar Pradesh, following its initial sighting during the 2024 rhino translocation initiative in the South Sonaripur range, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve Division, Palia Kheri.

The snake was observed during a coordinated tiger-tracking patrol by a team comprising wildlife biologists Vipin Kapoor Sainy, Apoorv Gupta, and Rohit Ravi (Senior Biologist, WWF India), along with veterinary expert Dr Talha, pharmacist Sandeep, and frontline staff Bhagiram and Nabisher Khan.

During routine monitoring, biologist Sainy spotted the slender, elongated snake moving slowly across the grassland edge toward a forest road. Recognising its significance, the team conducted non-invasive



photographic documentation and a brief health assessment, confirming the specimen's vitality and intact physical condition. The snake was safely released at the same location under the supervision of forest range officer Mohammad Ayub.

Field Director, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (DTR) Dr H Raja Mohan

lauded the biologists' team for the discovery and said: "Dudhwa is not just about tigers, elephants, or rhinos, it is an evolving repository of lesser-known and ecologically vital species."

He further said, "Such observations were possible only because of the dedicated teams that combined scientific exper-

The discovery of Ahaetulla longirostris, particularly the brown morph, which was never seen before in India, exemplifies the depth of biodiversity Dudhwa is blessed with

H RAJA MOHAN | FIELD DIRECTOR, DUDHWA TIGER RESERVE

tise with frontline conservation commitment."

Elaborating upon the new discovery, Deputy Director, DTR Dr Rengaraju T said, "The re-appearance of Ahaetulla longirostris in the Terai plains, and that too in two distinct colour morphs, green and brown, pointed towards a broader ecological amplitude."

He added, "The Kishanpur sighting opened new avenues to study polymorphism, microhabitat preferences, and

species distribution in the Indo-Gangetic region."

Dr Rengaraju T informed that the long-snouted Vine Snake was a mildly venomous snake distinguished by its laterally compressed body, sharply pointed snout, and horizontal pupils, features often leading to misidentification with closely related Ahaetulla species.

"These records placed Dudhwa at the forefront of herpetofaunal research in northern India. Dr Rengaraju said, "The Forest Department, along with scientific partners, is now planning to strengthen its biodiversity monitoring frameworks, encourage herpetological surveys, and build local capacity for the identification and conservation of cryptic species, ensuring that the full ecological spectrum of Dudhwa continues to be revealed."

of the day **quote**

As you all are aware, my car was stopped at the gate (of Mithila University). But I did not relent. I got out and took a circuitous route to reach here on foot



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

India has hit Pakistan hard. The ceasefire is for a few days now. But our army has taught a lesson and we have killed over a 100 terrorists in Pakistan. It is not the case that the operation has stopped after the mediation of US President Donald Trump. India has put forth a proposal that Pakistan should hand over the PoK (to India) and stop terror activities



RAMDAS ATHAWALE | UNION MINISTER

I congratulate all traders who have decided to boycott imports from Türkiye. At this juncture, 'nation first' should be our stand. There is a need to teach a lesson not only to those who orchestrated the killings in Pahalgam but also to the countries supporting them. I welcome this organic feeling of 'nation first' among citizens



DEVENDRA FADNIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

SHORT TAKES

Bengal: TMC MLA Tapas Saha dies

Krishnagar (WB): Trinamool Congress MLA Tapas Saha, whose name had surfaced in connection with the West Bengal school recruitment scam, passed away at a Kolkata hospital Thursday following a brain haemorrhage, party sources said. He was 66. Saha, the MLA of Tehatta constituency in West Bengal's Nadia district, was admitted to a private hospital off the EM Bypass in the eastern metropolis Tuesday after he suddenly collapsed.

ISRO to launch its 101st satellite Sunday

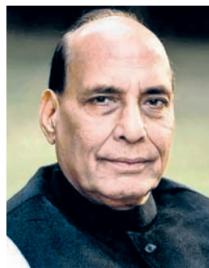
Chennai: ISRO will launch its 101st satellite May 18, its Chairman V Narayanan announced Thursday, and asserted that the space agency's programmes were planned to ensure the safety and security of the country. "We successfully launched the one-hundredth rocket from Sriharikota in January. India's 101st satellite - the Earth Observation Satellite RISAT-18 aboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C61) - will be launched May 18," the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation said.

Class X results of HP board declared

Dharamshala (HP): Girls outshined boys in the Class X results declared here by the Himachal Pradesh Board of School Education (HPBOSE) Thursday securing top seven positions, board officials said. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu congratulated the students for successfully passing the examinations. Saina Thakur, a student of Neugal Model Public School, Bhawarna in Kangra district, topped the examination securing 696 marks out of 700, scoring 99.43 per cent, in the academic session 2024-25, a statement from the board said.

Man killed by tiger

Malappuram (Kerala): A 45-year-old rubber-tapping worker was killed by a tiger in the wee hours of Thursday when he was on his way to work near Kalikavu here, police said. The death led to protests in the area and the government announced an enhanced compensation to the victim's family.



Terrorism and talks cannot go together; talks with Pakistan will only be held on terrorism and PoK. Operation Sindoor was a commitment demonstrated by India of not just carrying out defence, but taking bold decisions whenever needed

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

DON'T BEHAVE LIKE MAHARAJA; SC TELLS WARRING COUPLE

The Supreme Court Thursday reprimanded a couple locked in a matrimonial battle not to behave like "maharaja" as democracy has been prevailing for over 75 years as it also outlined the clash of egos in the case. The observations were directed at one half of the warring couple who reportedly belongs to a royal clan



Form SITs to examine status of forest land: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The Supreme Court Thursday directed all states and union territories to constitute special investigation teams to examine if any reserved forest land in possession of the revenue department was allotted to any private parties for non-forestry purpose.

Noting the "glaring issue" in which a vast stretch of notified forest land was still in possession of the revenue department, the apex court asked all the states and UTs to hand over possession of such lands to the forest department.

A bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavi and Justices Augustine George Masih and K Vinod Chandran referred to a report of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) which pointed to evidence to show that many forest lands were allotted to private persons or institutions for non-forestry purposes.

"We further direct the chief secretaries of all the states and the administrators of all the Union Territories to constitute special investigation teams for the purpose of examining as to whether any of the reserved forest land in the possession of the revenue department has been allotted to any private individuals/institutions for any purpose other than the forestry purpose," the bench said.

The states and UTs were also directed to take steps to retrieve possession of such lands and handover the same to the forest department. "In case, it is



The SC directed the chief secretaries of all the states and the administrators of the UTs to ensure that all forest land transfers are taken back within a year

found that taking back the possession of the land would not be in the larger public interest, the state governments/Union Territories should recover the cost of the said land from the persons/institutions to whom they were allotted and use the said amount for the purpose of development of forests," the bench said in its 88-page verdict.

It also directed the states and UTs to constitute special teams to ensure that all such transfers take place within a year. The top court delivered its verdict in a matter related to reserved forest land in Pune.

The bench held that the allotment of 11.89 hectare of the reserved forest land in village Kondhwa Budruk in Pune for agriculture purposes August 28, 1998 and subsequent permission given for its sale in

favour of Richie Rich Cooperative Housing Society Limited (RRCHS) October 30, 1999 was "totally illegal".

The bench noted the land was allotted in favour of one "Chavan family" in 1998. The top court, as a result, quashed the environmental clearance granted by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) July 3, 2007 to RRCHS.

The bench said since the state had recalled the communication of August 4, 1998 approving allotment of the land to "Chavan family" and it upheld the same. It directed that possession of the subject land, which is reserved as a forest land but is in possession of the revenue department, should be handed over to the forest department within three months.

Veerangana Durgavati Reserve may become new home for cheetahs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Authorities are considering developing the Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh as a new home for cheetahs, according to official records.

The matter of using the tiger reserve for cheetah relocation was first discussed at a meeting of the Cheetah Project Steering Committee in December last year. Asked about the decision to make it the third cheetah habitat in India, an official from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) said the "Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetahs in India" has listed the area as a potential site.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Wildlife Warden Shubharanjan Sen said, "This was mentioned in the meeting but nothing has happened on the ground yet." The 10 potential sites listed in the action plan for cheetah introduction are - Guru Ghasidas National Park in Chhattisgarh, Banni grasslands in Gujarat, Dubri Wildlife Sanctuary, Sanjay National Park, Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary, Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary (now Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve) and Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, Desert National Park and Shahgarh grasslands in Rajasthan and Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh.

26/11 MUMBAI TERROR CASE

Tushar Mehta to lead govt team in trial against Rana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The government has appointed a team of lawyers headed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to conduct trial against extradited Pakistani-Canadian terrorist Tahawwur Hussain Rana in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack case.

In a notification, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said the appointment has been made exercising the powers conferred under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

The central government hereby appoints a team of Special Public Prosecutors headed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and comprising Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, senior advocate Dayan Krishnan and advocate Narender Mann for conducting trial and other matters related to the case RC-04/2009/NIA/DLI on behalf of the NIA before the NIA Special



Courts at Delhi, High Court of Delhi and Supreme Court of India for three years or till the completion of trial of the said case, whichever is earlier, the notification said.

The RC-04/2009/NIA/DLI pertains to the case registered with the NIA in Delhi involving the trial of Rana and David Coleman Headley in connection with the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. The NIA secured Rana's extradition from the US following years of sustained efforts and arrested him April 10 upon his arrival here.

Rana is accused of being involved in the larger conspiracy behind 2008 dastardly strikes orchestrated by Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba in which 166 people were

Waqf row: SC to hear pleas May 20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

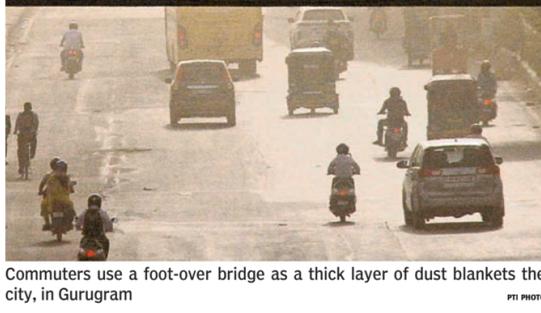
New Delhi, May 15: The Supreme Court Thursday said it would May 20 hear the point of interim relief in the challenge to the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

A bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavi and Augustine George Masih, which deferred Tuesday's hearing, would hear arguments for passing interim directions on three issues including the power to denotify properties declared as waqf by courts, waqf-by-user or waqf by deed. The second issue raised by the petitioners relates to the composition of state waqf boards and the Central Waqf Council, where they contend only Muslims should operate except ex-officio members.

The third issue relates to a provision that says a waqf property will not be treated as a waqf when the collector conducts an inquiry to ascertain if the property is government land. "We will be considering the issue of interim relief only Tuesday," the CJI said.

The bench asked senior advocate Kapil Sibal and others, appearing for those challenging the validity of the law, and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, to file their written notes by May 19. The bench was informed by the lawyers from both sides that the judges might require more time to go through the pleadings.

Mehta said in any case, there was a subsisting assurance of the Centre that no waqf properties, including those established by waqf by user, would be denotified. He had previously assured no appointments to the Central Waqf Council or state waqf boards would be made under the new law.



Commuters use a foot-over bridge as a thick layer of dust blankets the city, in Gurugram

19 dead in separate road accidents in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 15: At least 19 people, including women and children, lost their lives and dozens were injured in multiple road accidents in several parts of Uttar Pradesh, with major incidents taking place in Lucknow, Hardoi and Balrampur districts.

The spate of accidents prompted Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to instruct officials to expedite relief and medical response. Five passengers, including two children, were killed when a private bus caught fire on Kisan Path near Mohanlalganj on the outskirts of Lucknow early Thursday morning. The bus, carrying nearly 80 passengers and travelling from Begusarai (Bihar) to Delhi, caught fire around 5 am, allegedly due to a short circuit in the gearbox, according to Assistant Commissioner of Police Rajneesh Verma.

The blaze spread rapidly while most passengers were asleep. Though firefighters reached the spot promptly, five passengers - Lakshmi Devi (55), Soni Mahto (26), Devraj (3), Sakshi (2), and Madhusudan (21) - could not be saved, police said.

Several others sustained burn injuries and were hospitalised. Initial police probe revealed that the bus's emer-

gency exit had malfunctioned, trapping passengers in the rear section. Chief Minister Adityanath expressed grief over the incident and directed officials to ensure immediate treatment for the injured.

In Hardoi district, six people were killed and three seriously injured after an autorickshaw collided with a dumper truck near Hardaul Mau village around 9:45 am. The auto, travelling from Bangarmau to Sandila, was carrying nine passengers, police said.

In a separate incident, a collision between a car and a speeding truck on the Balrampur-Tulsipur National Highway claimed the lives of five members of a family returning from a wedding late Wednesday night.

The truck rammed into the car near Chakwa village, leaving five people dead and eight others seriously injured. The injured were taken to the District Memorial Hospital, Balrampur District Magistrate Pawan Agarwal and SP Vikas Kumar visited the hospital and directed that the best possible care be provided to the injured. Adityanath expressed sorrow and wished speedy recovery to the injured. Police said they have seized the car and initiated legal proceedings, though the driver remains at large.



Women washing Miss World contestants' feet sparks row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, May 15: A video showing some women helping wash the feet of Miss World contestants at Ramappa temple Thursday sparked controversy with opposition BRS and BJP flaying the act, terming it an insult to Telangana women.

Responding to the criticism, the state government in a post on 'X' said "This is a tradition we follow in accordance with the dictum 'Atithi Devo Bhava' by which we offer our international guests the highest honour".

The contestants, dressed in sarees, visited the historical Ramappa Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as part of their heritage tour in the state Wednesday. After they reached



Miss World 2025 contestants wash their feet with water before entering the Ramappa temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in Mulugu district, Telangana

the site, some women were seen in the video pouring water on the feet of the contestants, who were seated in a row, to wash their

feet. One woman was seen wiping the feet of a contestant with a towel and the video went viral. The "appalling" incident,

The contestants, dressed in sarees, visited the historical Ramappa Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as part of their heritage tour in the state Wednesday

After they reached the site, some women were seen in the video pouring water on the feet of the contestants, who were seated in a row, to wash their feet

One woman was seen wiping the feet of a contestant with a towel and the video went viral

where local Dalit, tribal, and economically disadvantaged women were "forced to wash and wipe" the feet of foreign beauty pageant participants, has unleashed a wave of out-

rage across Telangana, striking a devastating blow to the state's cherished self-respect, BRS said in a press release.

"Congress CM has officially lost his mind," BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said, reposting the video in his 'X' handle. Telangana BJP chief and Union minister G Kishan Reddy in a post on 'X' alleged that Congress party's century-old legacy of making Indians kneel before foreigners to appease their high command is evident and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, in his desperate bid to impress Delhi bosses, has trampled on the dignity and self-respect of Indian women.

"The Congress national leadership of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi should tender an unconditional apology to Telangana

women for blasphemy and for surrendering the dignity, culture and self-respect of our NariShakti," he further said in the post. Former Minister and BRS legislator Sabitha Indra Reddy in a post on 'X' described it as a grave insult to Telangana's daughters on the land that gave birth to heroic women like Rudramadevi, Sammakka, and Saral akka.

"The Congress government has stripped the honor of the daughters of the state. This incident has not only shamed Telangana but has also tarnished the dignity of Indian women before the world," she hit out at the state government. The Miss World grand finale is set to be held here May 31. During their stay, the contestants - over 100 in number - have been touring several key tourist attractions across the state.

national

of the day quote

Victory is celebrated, not a ceasefire. People of our country love peace. But our constitution and our democracy do not accept interference of any foreign country in our matters. This is the identity of our democracy

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

The current ₹10 lakh compensation is inadequate. It must be increased significantly

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

There is a competition among BJP leaders to turn every matter into a Hindu-Muslim issue. These leaders also questioned why Colonel Qureshi was given the task of briefing the media about Operation Sindoor. This has come to the fore again through the speech of minister Vijay Shah

DIGVIJAYA SINGH | CONGRESS LEADER

POST OF THE DAY

It will get harder for NRIs to buy property & stocks in India. [1] US is likely to apply 5% for remittances for NRIs. This means that NRIs sitting in US, if they send money abroad, will pay an additional 5% tax. [2] India already has a TCS of 20% for Indian Residents if they wish to send money abroad. [3] Point being: every country is trying to protect its outflow of capital. This will have massive implications: - NRIs have been buying Indian assets quite aggressively (right from Real Estate to stocks) - You might think: oh wow, now things will become cheap. Amazing! - Not really: US NRIs account for roughly 28% of all of our remittances. This is close to 32Bn\$. To put this in context: India's education budget is 15Bn\$. If we miss out on such large volume of money, it will have far-reaching consequences. When an additional layer of tax is put, they are likely to send less money. This impacts our foreign reserves. NRIs have been helping India massively: it is easy to brush their contributions aside. But, if they have less incentive to invest due to such taxations, the implications will be far lasting.

@Akshat_World

SHORT TAKES

Rashid bail plea: HC asks for NIA reply

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Thursday sought NIA's response on the bail plea of Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid in a terror funding case. A bench of Justices Subramonium Prasad and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar issued notice on the parliamentarian's plea against a trial court order refusing him bail March 21. The bench also asked the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to respond to Rashid's separate plea challenging the framing of charges in the case.

Custodial death: SC transfers case to CBI

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday castigated the Madhya Pradesh government for not taking action against policemen involved in the alleged custodial death of a 24-year-old man, and transferred the probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).



I strongly condemn the Union Government's Presidential reference, which attempts to subvert the Constitutional position already settled by the Supreme Court in the Tamil Nadu Governor's case and other precedents

M K STALIN | TN CM

INDIA, PAK EXTEND HOSTILITIES CEASEFIRE

Following the May 10 understanding between India and Pakistan on cessation of hostilities, it was decided to continue the confidence building measures to reduce the alertness level, Indian officials said Thursday



Turkish firm Celebi loses nod for airport services



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Aviation watchdog BCAS Thursday revoked the security clearance of ground handling company Celebi Airport Services India, a unit of Turkiye's Celebi, with immediate effect in the "interest of national security".

The move by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security came against the backdrop of Turkiye's backing for Pakistan and its condemnation of India's recent strikes on terror camps in the neighbouring country and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) under 'Operation Sindoor'. Pakistan had also used Turkish drones on a large scale in the military conflict with India.

Official sources, meanwhile, said the government may discourage people from going to Turkiye as well as Azerbaijan, which had also actively supported Pakistan in the conflict. As a result, there is likely to be a significant drop in visits of Indian tourists, hosting of destination weddings and shooting of Indian films in the two countries in the coming days, the sources said.

"...the security clearance in r/o Celebi Airport Services India Pvt Ltd is hereby revoked with immediate effect in the interest of national security," the BCAS said in an order. The security clearance under the category 'Ground Handling Agency' was approved by the BCAS in November 2022. There are also calls in certain quarters for boycotting Turkish goods and tourism. Some online travel

The move by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security came against the backdrop of Turkiye's backing for Pakistan and its condemnation of India's recent strikes on terror camps in the neighbouring country and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) under 'Operation Sindoor'

Pakistan had also used Turkish drones on a large scale in the military conflict with India

portals and associations have issued advisories asking people not to visit Turkiye.

While India's trade ties with the two countries have already come under scrutiny, multiple educational institutions, including Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), have either suspended their collaboration with universities in Turkiye or are considering it.

In a post on X, Jamia Millia Islamia said it has suspended all academic collaborations with institutions affiliated with the government of Turkiye.

"Due to national security considerations, any Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, and any institution affiliated with the Government of the Republic of Turkiye stands suspended with immediate effect, until further orders. Jamia Millia Islamia stands firmly with the Nation," the university said.

Celebi Aviation India rejected allegations regarding the

company's ownership and operations in India and reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to the country's aviation sector.

In compliance with the BCAS directive, Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) formally ended its association with Celebi entities responsible for ground handling and cargo operations at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA).

Following the termination, DIAL is working closely with existing service providers to ensure uninterrupted operations while safeguarding employee welfare, a DIAL statement said.

Celebi Airport Services India, which is part of Turkiye-based Celebi, offers services at nine airports - Mumbai, Delhi, Cochin, Kannur, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Goa (GOX), Ahmedabad and Chennai. Celebi has been operating in India for the past 15 years.

Official sources told PTI the government is actively considering discouraging Indians from visiting Turkiye and Azerbaijan. A large number of Indian tourists visit the two countries every year bringing in a sizeable amount of revenue, they noted.

The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) and All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) on Wednesday appealed to Indian artists and producers to boycott Turkiye as a shooting destination for its pro-Pakistan stance. According to estimates, about three lakh Indian tourists visited Turkiye in 2024 and over two lakh to Azerbaijan.

Meanwhile, a trader in Pune claimed to have received a threatening voice message from Pakistan, days after a group of fruit traders in the city decided to stop importing apples from Turkiye to protest against that country's open support to Pakistan. Suyog Zende, a trader at the Agriculture Produce Market Committee, commonly known as Marketyard in Pune, and some others had said they will not deal in apples from Turkiye. Traders at Marketyard also threw apples imported from Turkiye on the road.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A foreign tourist holds an umbrella while posing for photographs on a hot sunny day, at the Taj Mahal in Agra, Uttar Pradesh

Ramgopal Yadav stirs controversy with Vyomika 'caste' remark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 15: Samajwadi Party leader Ramgopal Yadav Thursday sparked a controversy when he said Colonel Sofiya Qureshi was targeted by a BJP minister as she is a Muslim but Wing Commander Vyomika Singh was spared thinking she was Rajput.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reacted sharply to the remark, saying the uniform of armed forces is not seen through 'casteist glasses' as every soldier performs 'Rashtradharma' and is not a representative of any caste or religion. Wing Commander Singh was a regular face in the press briefings on Operation Sindoor along with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Colonel Sofiya Qureshi. While taking a dig at the multiple Tiranga Yatra being taken out by the BJP across the country, Yadav at a programme in Moradabad, said, "These people (BJP) are taking out the Tiranga Yatra... They do everything only for elections. What is the need to take out the Tiranga Yatra? If there is a need then the whole country should be taken into confidence, all the political parties should be taken into confidence."

TRUMP'S 'ZERO-TARIFFS' REMARKS

Cong questions Modi's 'silence'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The Congress Thursday questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on US President Donald Trump's remarks in Doha, where he claimed that India has agreed to "zero tariffs" on several American goods as against its "highest" tariffs, asking what linkage does it have with the stopping of Operation Sindoor.

"The Commerce Minister is in Washington DC and President Trump has made yet another grand announcement from Doha. There is total chuppi from our PM. What has he agreed to and what linkage is there between this and the stoppage of Operation Sindoor?"

AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked in a post on X. He also tagged a report quoting Trump that India has offered "zero tariffs" on several American goods as part of its trade deal with the United States. "India is one of the highest tariff nations in the world. It is very hard to sell in India. They have offered us a deal where basically they are willing to - literally - they charge us no tariff. We go from the highest tariff -- you could not do business in India, we are not even in the top 30 in India because the tariff is so high - to a point where they have actually told us that there will be no tariff. Would you say that is the difference? They were the high-

Tricolour belongs to all: Sachin Pilot

New Delhi: Congress leader Sachin Pilot Thursday said the government at its highest levels should rebut President Donald Trump's claims on the India-Pakistan "ceasefire" and asserted the US' attempts at hyphenating the two countries and internationalising Kashmir is not good for India's global standing. In an interview with PTI, he said Trump's claims of brokering a "ceasefire" based on some threats and allurements of trade deals is "absolutely shocking".

est, and now they are saying no tariff," Trump said in Doha.

India is currently holding talks for finalising a trade deal with the United States and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal is in the US for the negotiations. Congress's data analytics department and Professionals' Congress chairman Pravin Chakravarty, in a post on X, shared an old speech of Modi, in which he had said, "Ab ki baar, Trump Sarkar."

"Pakistan PM and India PM are equal. Pakistan and India are equal powers. Apple should not manufacture in India. Kashmir is an international issue. "Only India's sworn enemy would say this? No, these are by President Trump! Who went to US and campaigned for Ab ki baar Trump Sarkar?" Chakravarty asked in his post.

SNIPPETS

Jaishankar speaks to Afghan foreign minister

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Thursday spoke to his Afghan counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi and appreciated his condemnation of the Pahalgam terrorist attack. Jaishankar described the conversation as "good". "Deeply appreciate his condemnation of the Pahalgam terrorist attack," Jaishankar said on X. "Welcomed his firm rejection of recent attempts to create distrust between India and Afghanistan through false and baseless reports," he said. "Underlined our traditional friendship with the Afghan people and continuing support for their development needs. Discussed ways and means of taking cooperation forward," Jaishankar added.

PM Modi reviews fisheries sector progress and plans

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday stressed on modernising the fisheries sector through smart harbours and markets, and the use of drones to transport and market the catch. Chairing a meeting to review the progress and future plans of the fisheries sector with a focus on deep-sea fishing and seafood exports, the prime minister said there is a need to move towards a healthier system of functioning so as to add value to the supply chain. He also called for using drones as per technical protocols for the transportation of fresh fish from the production centres to the nearby markets in cities and towns in consultation with the civil aviation authorities, a statement said.

SC directs Centre to set up special POC SO courts

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday directed the Centre to set up on "top priority basis" dedicated POC SO courts to exclusively deal with cases of sexual offences against children. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and P B Varale said due to the inadequacy of the number of exclusive courts for the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act cases, the timelines mandated under the law for completion of trials weren't adhered to. "It is therefore expected that the union of India and the state governments shall take appropriate steps to sensitise the officials associated with the investigation of POC SO cases, and also to create dedicated courts to try POC SO cases on top priority basis," the bench said. The top court further directed filing of chargesheets within the mandatory period stipulated in law besides completing trials within the prescribed time frame.

'18% of state Bills in '24 took over 3 months for Guvs' assent'

The report comes amid an ongoing debate following the Supreme Court's verdict that the President should decide on the Bills reserved for her consideration by the governor within three months from the date on which such reference is received

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: There was a wide variation in time taken by governors to give assent to bills in 2024 and around 18 per cent bills across states took more than three months to get the final clearance, a report by thinktank PRS Legislative Research said.

The Annual Review of State Laws report of PRS released Thursday said in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Mizoram and Rajasthan, all bills received assent within

a month. Across states, 60 per cent of bills received assent from the governor within a month.

"In 2024, across states, there was wide variation in the time taken by governors to give assent to bills," the PRS report said. States where a high proportion of bills got assent after more than three months include Congress ruled Himachal Pradesh (72 per cent of bills passed), Trinamool Congress ruled West Bengal (38 per cent), as well as Sikkim (56 per cent). Of the bills passed in



2024, 18 per cent got assent after more than three months. These include bills awaiting assent as of April, 2025.

The Tamil Nadu government had approached the Supreme Court regarding 12 bills, pend-

ing with the governor, which were passed by the legislature between 2020 and 2023. After notice from the court, in 2023, the governor returned 10 of these bills to the assembly. When the legislature passed

them again, the governor reserved the bills for the President's opinion, and the bills have been pending since then. The Supreme Court is also set to hear a petition regarding seven bills pending for assent by the governor of Kerala.

Some states have had issues with summoning of session and governor's address, the report said, as assembly session begins with the governor summoning the House, and ends when the governor pro-rogues it.

In February 2023, the Punjab government had approached the Supreme Court, stating that the governor was not summoning the Budget Session. The court stated that the governor was bound by the advice given by the state Cabinet. Some states did not pro-

rogue sessions, thus enabling the Speaker to call sittings without requiring the summons from the governor. In 2024, sessions continued for more than six months in Delhi, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal without prorogation, with long gaps between sittings. In Delhi, a session continued from February to December 2024. In Tamil Nadu, the same session continued from February to December 2024, with 18 sittings.

In West Bengal, a session which began in July 2023 has not been prorogued as of May 2025. In Tamil Nadu, in February 2024, the governor had refused to read his address to the assembly and had walked out of the House; a similar incident also happened in January 2025.



Most Albanians, within and outside Albania, think Albania is on the right path. Albania can only achieve EU membership by 2030 through our collective effort, led by me and the Socialist Party

EDI RAMA | PRIME MINISTER, ALBANIA

BEAUTY INFLUENCER SHOT DEAD

A social media influencer was shot to death while doing a TikTok livestream at a beauty salon in the central Mexican state of Jalisco, state authorities confirmed Wednesday. The stark show of violence fuelled shock in the Latin American nation at a time when rival cartels have fought bloody wars for territorial control in much of Mexico



of the day quote

I would try to urge Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend possible peace talks this week with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy



LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA | PRESIDENT, BRAZIL

That is a signal to our region of the importance that we place on this region. We will be in the fastest growing region of the world in human history



ANTHONY ALBANESE | NEWLY RE-ELECTED PM, AUSTRALIA

This fighter jet violated NATO territory, for one minute. This is something very new



MARGUS TSAHKNA | ESTONIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Indian envoy in Saudi inspects Haj facilities

Dubai: Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Dr Suhel Khan Thursday inspected facilities set up to ensure a smooth pilgrimage for Indian Haj pilgrims. India has a total Haj quota of 1.75 lakh pilgrims for 2025. The Indian Embassy in Riyadh in a post on X said Ambassador Khan inspected various functional desks, branch offices, and branch dispensaries set up to serve the Indian pilgrims in Makkah. He was accompanied by Consul (Haj) Muhammed Abdul Jaleel and other coordinators, it said. Khan, along with Jaleel, also "undertook a comprehensive review of the Azizia transport in Makkah", the embassy said.

Khan to undergo polygraph test

Lahore: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has allowed police to conduct polygraph (lie detection) and photogrammetric (facial and voice analysis) tests of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan in cases related to the May 9 violence, an official said Thursday. The tests will be conducted for 12 terrorism cases against Khan related to the violent protests which erupted May 9, 2023, after his arrest by paramilitary Rangers from the Islamabad High Court premises.

India's Environment Minister in Nepal

Kathmandu: Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav arrived in Nepal Thursday to participate in the 'Sagarmatha Samvad' or 'Mountain Dialogue'. The dialogue will kick off here Friday to draw global attention to the severe impact of climate change on mountain countries. "Landed in Kathmandu, Nepal today to attend the Sagarmatha Sambaad, organized by the Government of Nepal", Yadav said in a social media post.

China grants visa-free entry to 5 Latin nations

Beijing: China will allow visa-free entry for nationals of five Latin American countries for one year to boost closer connections with the region. Starting June 1, citizens of Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay will be allowed to enter China for up to 30 days without a visa, China's Foreign Ministry announced Thursday. The trial programme will be in effect for one year. "We welcome more foreign friends to visit China, to experience the colourful and vibrant China," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a daily briefing.

DIMMING HOPES FOR PEACE

Putin snubs Zelenskyy peace talks in Turkey



REUTERS

Istanbul, May 15: Russia's Vladimir Putin spurned a challenge to meet face-to-face with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Turkey Thursday, dealing a blow to prospects for a peace breakthrough.

The Russian president dispatched a second-tier team of aides and deputy ministers to take part in talks in Istanbul, while US President Donald Trump, on a tour of the Gulf, undercut the chances of major progress when he said there would be no movement in the absence of a meeting between himself and Putin.

Zelenskyy said Putin's decision not to attend but to send what he called a "decorative" line-up showed the Russian leader was not serious about ending the war.

He said he himself would not go to Istanbul, but would send a team, headed by his defence minister, with a mandate to discuss a ceasefire. It was not clear when the talks would actually begin.

"We can't be running around the world looking for Putin," Zelenskyy said after meeting Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara.

"I feel disrespect from Russia. No meeting time, no agenda, no high-level delegation - this is personal disrespect. To Erdogan, to Trump," Zelenskyy told reporters.

Zelenskyy backs an immediate, unconditional 30-day ceasefire but Putin has said he first wants to start talks at which the details of such a truce could be discussed. More than three years after its full-scale invasion, Russia has the advantage on the battlefield and says Ukraine could use a pause in the war to call up extra troops and acquire more Western weapons.

Both Trump and Putin have said for months they are keen to meet each other, but no date has been set. Trump, after piling heavy pressure on Ukraine and clashing with Zelenskyy in the Oval Office in February, has lately expressed growing impatience that Putin may be "tapping me along".

- Putin stays away, sends lower-level team
■ Zelenskyy says Russian line-up looks 'decorative'
■ Ukrainian team to be headed by defence minister
■ Not clear yet when talks will begin
■ Trump says nothing will happen until he and Putin meet

"Nothing's going to happen until Putin and I get together," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One.

DIPLOMATIC CONFUSION The diplomatic disarray was symptomatic of the deep hostility between the warring sides and the unpredictability injected by Trump, whose interventions since returning to the White House in January have often provoked dismay from Ukraine and its European allies.

While Zelenskyy waited in vain for Putin in Ankara, the Russian negotiating team sat in Istanbul with no one to talk to on the Ukrainian side. Some 200 reporters milled around near the Dolmabahce Palace on the Bosphorus that the Russians had specified as the talks venue.

The enemies have been wrestling for months over the logistics of ceasefires and peace talks while trying to show Trump they are serious about trying to end what he calls "this stupid war".

Trump said Thursday he would go to the talks in Turkey Friday if it was "appropriate".

"I just hope Russia and Ukraine are able to do something. It has to stop," he said.

US close to N-deal with Iran: Trump

REUTERS

Dubai, May 15: President Donald Trump said Thursday that the United States was getting very close to securing a nuclear deal with Iran, and Tehran had "sort of" agreed to the terms.

"We're in very serious negotiations with Iran for long-term peace," Trump said on a tour of the Gulf, according to a shared pool report by AFP.

"We're getting close to maybe doing a deal without having to do this... there (are) two steps to doing this, there is a very, very nice step and there is the violent step, but I don't want to do it the second way," he said.

However, an Iranian source familiar with the negotiations said there were still gaps to bridge in the talks with the US. Oil prices fell by about \$2 Thursday on expectations of a US-Iran nuclear deal that could result in

sanctions easing.

Talks between Iranian and US negotiators to resolve disputes over Tehran's nuclear programme ended in Oman Sunday with further negotiations expected, officials said, as Tehran publicly insisted on continuing its uranium enrichment.

The Trump administration gave Iran a proposal for a nuclear deal during the fourth



round of negotiations Sunday, a US official and two other sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Axios.

But a senior Iranian official said Tehran had not received any fresh proposal from the United States to resolve the decades-long nuclear dispute, adding that Iran would never compromise on its right to en-

- Trump says 'very serious' negotiations under way
■ US president says he wants to avoid violence
■ Oil prices fall on expectations of a deal

rich uranium on its soil.

Though Tehran and Washington have both said they prefer diplomacy to resolve the



Cadets and young volunteers unfurl a giant replica of the Soviet Flag of Victory continuing to mark the Victory Day to celebrate 80 years after the victory in World War II, The Great Patriotic War for the Soviet Union, next to the Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia, Thursday

SNIPPETS

Indian mission updates UK on Operation Sindoor

London: The Indian High Commissioner to the UK Vikram Doraiswami has been leading proactive engagement sessions with Indian community groups and parliamentarians to reiterate the successes of Operation Sindoor. Over the course of this week, the High Commission of India in London hosted an interactive community engagement session to spotlight the effective dismantling of terror sites in Pakistan and the valour of India's armed forces with the diaspora. In a meeting with the India All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) in London Wednesday, Doraiswami also emphasised the many opportunities opened up by the recently concluded negotiations for an India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA). "On May 14, HC [High Commissioner] Vikram Doraiswami briefed the India APPG about the successes of Operation Sindoor, and India's resolute, responsible, proportionate and very effective dismantling of terror sites in Pakistan and on territory it illegally occupies, and the new normal established by India in enforcing its unwavering commitment to securing the nation from terror and those who back and finance it," the High Commission said in a statement on social media.



West pitching India, China against each other: Lavrov



Moscow: The West is pitching India and China against each other, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said here Thursday. Lavrov made the remarks at a meeting of the "Culture without Borders: the Role and Development of Cultural Diplomacy" diplomatic club, according to the state-run TASS news agency. "Take note of the current developments in the Asia-Pacific region, which the West has started calling the Indo-Pacific region to give its policy a clear anti-China orientation - expecting thereby to additionally clash our great friends and neighbours India and China," Lavrov said. Lavrov, who was a vocal critic of the QUAD grouping comprising India, Australia, Japan and the US to contain China, has muted his criticism after the setting up of AUKUS -- a military alliance of Australia, the UK and the US. The foreign minister said the West is trying to undermine the role of ASEAN in Asia. "Western colleagues,

as in any other part of the world, want to play a major role here, they want to undermine the central role of ASEAN, which suited everyone for many, many decades and was based on the formation of a unifying space by the ASEAN countries and their partners in dialogue both in the field of politics and in the field of military cooperation, in the field of defence," Lavrov was quoted as saying by TASS.

Israeli onslaught kills at least 85 in Gaza

REUTERS

Cairo, May 15: Israeli military strikes killed at least 85 people in the Gaza Strip Thursday, Palestinian medics said, as the United States and Arab mediators pushed for a ceasefire deal and US President Donald Trump visited the Middle East.

Most of the victims, including women and children, were killed in Khan Younis in southern Gaza in airstrikes that hit homes and tents, they said.

The dead included journalist Hassan Samour, who worked for the Hamas-run Aqsa radio station and was killed along with 11 family members when their home was hit, the medics said.

The Israeli military said its air force had struck 130 targets used by militant groups in Gaza over the past two days.

Israel has intensified its of-

fensive in Gaza as it tries to eradicate Hamas in retaliation for the deadly attacks the Palestinian militant group carried out on Israel in 2023.

In Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip, the health ministry said an Israeli strike on Al-Tawba medical clinic killed at least 15 people and wounded several others. It took Thursday's death toll to 85, medics said.

Hamas said in a statement that Israel was making a "desperate attempt to negotiate under cover of fire" as indirect ceasefire talks take place, also involving Trump envoys and Qatar and Egyptian mediators in Doha.

Palestinians Thursday commemorated the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands fled or were forced to flee their towns and villages during the 1948 war that gave birth to Israel.

Tariff truce sparks hopes for Halloween orders in China

REUTERS

Yiwu, China, May 15: A tariff truce between the United States and China is helping kickstart the resumption of trade between the countries but for manufacturers of Halloween decorations in the eastern Chinese city of Yiwu feelings are mixed.

President Donald Trump's tariffs on Chinese imports, which reached 145% in April, prompted waves of US customers to suspend or delay orders for festive decorations, disrupting business for the likes of Lou Xiaobo, whose company Xubo relies on the US for 20% of sales.

The 25-year-old, whose family has been making Halloween decorations in Yiwu for 28 years, warned they would have to scramble to produce and

ship their hanging skeletons and costume props to America in time for the October 31 holiday.

Customers are weighing up the cost of the new 30% tariff rate and although he is expecting orders, Lou is also warning customers his business cannot produce more complex made-to-order products in time.

"I don't think because tariffs are lowered; we should be happy, because they have already delayed our production time," he told Reuters from his family's store at Yiwu's sprawling wholesale market.

"In these two months we have lost (to tariffs), we can produce about 500,000 yuan of goods, but now I only have 200,000 yuan. I'm not happy just because tariffs have been lowered."

His comments point to how



the damage has been done for many Chinese manufacturers that rely on the US market. While they say the truce has brought hope that orders will return, uncertainty still exists

given the current 90-day limit on lower tariffs and the Trump administration's unpredictability. China manufactures the majority of festive decorations the

Tariff truce brings mixed feelings for manufacturers in China

Producers of Halloween decorations scramble to meet deadlines

Tariffs were imposed at 'utmost worst time'

US buys, not just for Halloween but for other events such as the Fourth of July and Christmas. "The tariffs were implemented at the utmost worst time for the Halloween manufacturer, as product was either finished and on a boat being held up, or in some stage of production that was halted," said Robert Berman, a board member of the Halloween and Costume Association and the CEO of Imposta Costumes.

"China for many in the Hal-

loween industry creates a one and done system," he added. "Yes, we can diversify and find new countries, but this will take years, and many of us are too far along to make any changes for 2025."

Another exporter of Halloween masks, who only gave her surname as Ma, said she was hopeful that customers would now place orders, though she believes her overall exporting business turnover will be much lower than last year.

"If people order now, to ship it in June or July, it probably won't be too late, but if we don't have these in stock, which means they have to be made to order, we won't be able to get them in stock for Halloween," she said.

"Anyway, I definitely hope they don't start up the trade war again!"



WE are already partnering with leading businesses across regions, delivering innovative solutions that drive transformative growth and set new standards in operational excellence. As we move forward, our focus remains on becoming the most trusted growth partner—leveraging advanced AI capabilities to provide tailored strategies that empower clients worldwide to lead and thrive in their markets

DEEPTI TAYAL | CEO, INGENIOUS E-BRAIN

AIRTEL'S FRAUD DETECTION TO BLOCK ROGUE SITES, APPS, PLATFORMS

Airtel Thursday launched a fraud detection solution that will identify and block malicious websites across all communication Over-The-Top (OTT) apps and platforms including WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, email, and others in real time. The service is currently available in Haryana circle, with a nationwide roll-out planned soon.



of the day quote

By transforming everyday PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate) bottle waste into high-performance industrial packaging, we want to create value not just for businesses, but for communities and the environment



RAM SARANGI | CHEMCO GROUP CHAIRMAN

"Freshers can find varied opportunities in the sector, but with domain-specific skills, particularly in network security, cloud computing, and DevOps. Certifications in RF Wireless Engineering, Cybersecurity, and Cloud Network Architecture have become increasingly relevant



SHANTANU ROOD | FOUNDER, TEAMLEASE EDTECH

The turbines are specially designed for Indian wind conditions and environment. With planned capacities of 2GW in 2026, Senvion plans to deploy the turbines extensively in India, leading to creating local jobs and energy security for the country



AMIT KANSAL | CEO, SENVION INDIA

Export rises, trade deficit widens

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: India's exports rose by 9.03 per cent to USD 38.49 billion in April on healthy growth in sectors such as electronics and engineering goods, while the trade deficit widened to a five-month high of USD 26.42 billion.

According to the commerce ministry data released Thursday, imports increased by 19.12 per cent year-on-year to USD 64.91 billion in April due to a rise in shipments of crude oil and fertiliser. The spurt in imports widened the trade deficit—the difference between the value of imports and exports—to the highest since November 2024 when it was recorded at USD 31.77 billion.

The sectors which recorded export growth during the month included tobacco, coffee, marine products, tea, ready-made garments of all textiles, rice, gems and jewellery, spices, petroleum products and pharmaceuticals.



The outbound shipments of electronics and engineering goods rose by 39.51 per cent and 11.28 per cent to USD 3.69 billion and USD 9.51 billion, respectively.

Whereas, Crude oil imports in April rose by 25.6 per cent to USD 20.7 billion while gold imports were up by 4.86 per cent to USD 3.09 billion. Com-

menting on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said, "I hope India will maintain this export momentum and it should be a good year for us" despite global uncertainties.

"We have opened this year with a bang," he added that exporters have achieved resiliency in their businesses.

The secretary also said that

I hope India will maintain this export momentum and it should be a good year for us" despite global uncertainties

SUNIL BARTH WAL | COMMERCE SECRETARY

the strategy to focus on 20 countries and six commodities is yielding positive results and the commerce ministry will continue to focus on this. He also said that many free trade agreements are going to be concluded soon.

According to the data, the estimated value of services exports for April 2025 was USD 35.31 billion compared to USD 30.18 Billion in April 2024. The estimated value of services imports for April 2025 was USD 17.54 billion as compared to USD 16.76 billion in April 2024.

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEP) Secretary General Mithileshwar Thakur said India's apparel exports grew by 14.43 per cent despite ongoing global economic challenges, currency fluctuations and the uncertainty surrounding US reciprocal tariff policy.

STOCKS SHINE

SENSEX RISES, NIFTY ROARS

BSE Sensex soared by 1,200 points, NSE Nifty closed above the 25,000 mark for the first time in seven months



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 15: Benchmark BSE Sensex soared by 1,200 points while NSE Nifty closed above the 25,000 mark for the first time in seven months Thursday following across-the-board buying triggered by expectations of potential trade deal between India and US.

Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,200.18 points or 1.48 per cent to settle at a seven-month high of 82,530.74 with 29 of constituents ending higher. The index moved in a range in the first half, but picked up momentum in the afternoon trading session following sharp gains in banking, auto, IT and oil & gas shares.

Sensex rallied 1,387.58 points or 1.70 per cent to hit a day's high of 82,718.14 in the second half of the session. The NSE Nifty surged 395.20 points or 1.60 per cent to settle at a seven-month high of 25,062.10. The 50-issue index had closed above 25,000 on October 15, 2024, previously.

Rate-sensitive sectors such as automobiles and real estate led the rally, supported by upbeat industry forecasts, Nair said adding that investors are now more eager to see the impact of upcoming speech by the Chair of the Federal Reserve, which is anticipated to provide further clarity on the future policy tra-

jectory, particularly in light of the recent easing in US inflation data.

US President Donald Trump Thursday claimed that India has offered to drop all tariffs on American goods. Among Sensex shares, Tata Motors was the biggest gainer climbing by over 4 per cent. HCL Tech, Adani Ports, Eternal, Maruti, Reliance Industries and Asian Paints were among the gainers. HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and Infosys added to the rally.

IndusInd Bank emerged as the only laggard.

Broader markets also closed higher with the BSE small cap gauge climbing 0.94 per cent and mid cap index by 0.67 per cent. Sector indices ended higher, with realty surging 1.87 per cent, auto (1.86 per cent), services (1.85 per cent), industrials (1.62 per cent), metal (1.60 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.57 per cent) and commodities (1.51 per cent).

"While benchmark indices gyrated sharply in early trades, it quickly regained the lost momentum and rallied sharply thereafter on all-around buying support despite pessimism in European and other Asian bourses," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. As many as 2,639 stocks advanced while 1,325 declined and 150 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The market staged a robust rebound, closing with substantial gains, driven by a decline in domestic inflation and positive signals from the US regarding a potential trade agreement with India

VINOD NAIR | RESEARCH HEAD, GEOJIT INVESTMENTS

Income tax exemption for startups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The government Thursday announced 187 startups for income tax exemption. The tax benefit allows eligible startups a 100 per cent income tax deduction on profits for any three consecutive years within a ten-year window from the date of incorporation.

The income tax benefit scheme is designed to support emerging businesses in their formative years, encouraging innovation, job creation, and wealth generation.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has approved 187 startups for income tax exemption under the revamped Section 80-IAC of the IT act, the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement.

The decision regarding this was taken during the meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Board (IMB), and around 3800 startups have now been granted exemptions since the scheme's inception, it said.

In an announcement during the Union Budget 2025-26, the government extended the eligibility window for startups to claim benefits. Startups incorporated before April 1, 2030, are now eligible to apply, giving more time and opportunity to new ventures to benefit from this financial relief.

Pertinently, the revised evaluation framework introduced by DPIIT has made the application process more structured and transparent. Complete applications are now reviewed within 120 days, ensuring faster decision-making and reducing procedural delays, it said.

Startups that were not approved in the latest round have been encouraged to reassess and refine their applications, it added.

Apple's India investment plans intact: Govt sources

Apple executives assured the Indian government officials that the company's investment plans are intact and the country would be a major manufacturing base of the company

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: iPhone maker Apple's investment plans for India are intact and the company proposes to have a major manufacturing base for its products in the country, government sources said.

Soon after US President Donald Trump made a statement that he has asked Apple CEO Tim Cook to cut India manufacturing, Indian officials spoke to executives of the Cupertino-based firm.

Apple executives assured the Indian government officials that the company's investment plans are intact and the country would be a major manufacturing base of Apple.

"Apple has said that its investment plans in India are intact and it proposes to continue to have India as a major manufacturing base for its products," the source said. E-mail query



sent to Apple in this regard elicited no immediate response.

Earlier in the day, Trump said he spoke to Cook and told him that he doesn't want Apple to make its products in India and instead increase production in US. He said that India is one of the highest tariff nations in the world and it is very hard to sell into India.

Cook has announced that Apple will source the majority of iPhones sold in US from India in the June quarter while China will produce the vast majority of the devices for other markets amid uncertainty over tax tariffs.

According to government sources, 15 per cent of iPhone's global output comes from India. Foxconn, Tata Electronics and Pegatron India (majorly

owned by Tata Electronics) are engaged in manufacturing iPhones.

Foxconn has also started manufacturing Apple AirPods in Telangana for exports.

According to an analysis by S&P Global, iPhone sales in the US were 75.9 million units in 2024, with exports in March from India at 3.1 million units, suggesting a need to double shipments either through new capacity or redirecting shipments bound for the domestic market.

"Apple's Indian exports already headed predominantly to the United States, which represented 81.9 per cent of phones exported by the firm in the three months to February 28, 2025. That increased to 97.6 per cent in March 2025 as a result of a 219 per cent jump in exports, likely reflecting the firm looking to preempt higher tariffs," S&P Global Market Intelligence report said.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had in April announced that iPhones worth ₹1.5 lakh crore were exported from India in fiscal year 2025. The Apple ecosystem in India is one of the biggest job creators in the country. It is estimated to have employed around 2 lakh people across various vendors in the country.

Indian Bank opens new branch at Hatasahi in Puri

BHUBANESWAR: Indian Bank inaugurated a new branch at Hatasahi under Pipili block in Odisha, marking its 8th branch in Puri district under Bhubaneswar zonal office. The move aims to enhance financial inclusion in unbanked rural areas. The inauguration ceremony was led by M Aruna, field GM, Indian Bank, Bhubaneswar. Hrushikesh Tripathy, OAS & Tahasildar, Pipili; Ganesh Behera, Sarpanch (Hatasahi), Suman Kumar, zonal manager, and deputy zonal manager Biswanath Das also graced the occasion. Speaking at the event, Aruna said, "The bank is committed to promoting a saving culture and supporting Self Help Groups (SHGs) to drive rural development and inclusive growth." The event began with a ribbon-cutting and lamp-lighting ceremony, symbolising the bank's dedication to community service. On its first day, the branch opened 50 savings and 10 recurring deposit accounts. Indian Bank is currently running the RD Sanchaya Lakhpati campaign, offering a 7.85% interest rate for super senior citizens with a 15-month tenure.



BIZ BUZZ

India's unemployment rate at 5.1% in April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The rate of unemployment in the country, measured in monthly term for the first time, stood at 5.1 per cent in April this year, showed the government data released Thursday.

The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation released the first monthly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) as part of efforts to monitor the proportion of unemployed people among those eligible for jobs in the country in real time. Until now, the labour force survey was released on a quarterly as well as annual basis.

The latest data collected in current weekly status (CWS) showed that unemployment rate for persons of all ages during April 2025 worked out



to be 5.1 per cent in April 2025. The pace of joblessness among men stayed slightly higher at 5.2 per cent compared to that of women at 5 per cent.

Joblessness among those in the age group of 15-29 was 13.8 per cent across the country. The rate of unemployment in urban areas stood at 17.2 per cent, while it was 12.3 per cent

in rural areas.

CWS refers to the activity status determined on the basis of a reference period of last 7 days preceding the date of survey. The study further showed that unemployment rate (UR) among women in the age group of 15-29 was 14.4 across the country (rural+urban), while it was 23.7 in cities and 10.7 per

cent in villages.

Joblessness among men aged 15-29 years was recorded at 13.6 per cent in the country, while it was 15 per cent in cities and 13 per cent in villages. The data also showed that Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) among people aged 15 years and above was 55.6 per cent during April 2025. The participation rate in rural areas was 58.0 per cent while it was 50.7 per cent in urban areas.

LFPR (refers to the percentage of persons in labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) among males aged 15 years and above in rural and urban areas were 79.0 per cent and 75.3 per cent, respectively. Among females aged 15 years and above, the rate of labour force participation was 38.2 per cent for rural

areas during April 2025.

Worker Population Ratio (WPR) defines the proportion of those who are employed among total population. WPR in rural areas among those aged 15 years and above was 55.4 per cent in April, the data showed.

The ratio in urban areas was 47.4 per cent, while the overall WPR at the national level was recorded at 52.8 per cent last month. WPR among females aged 15 years and above in rural and urban areas were 36.8 per cent and 23.5 per cent respectively. The overall female WPR of the same age group at the country level was 32.5 per cent. Considering the need for high-frequency labour force indicators with enhanced coverage, the sampling methodology of PLFS has been revamped from January 2025.

PV demand rises 4%; two-wheelers' demand dips 17% in April: SIAM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Passenger vehicles (PV) dispatches from factories to company dealerships in the country increased 4 per cent yearly to 3,48,847 units in April, industry body Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said Thursday.

PV dispatches stood at 3,35,629 units in April last year. PV segment posted its highest-ever sales of April in 2025 of 3.49 lakh units, with a growth of 3.9 per cent as compared with April 2024, SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon said.

Total two-wheeler dispatches, however, declined 17 per cent year-on-year to 14,58,784 units in April, SIAM said in a statement. Bike, scooter and moped wholesales in April 2024 stood at 17,51,393 units. Last month scooter sales stood at 5,48,370 units, down 6 per cent from 5,81,277 units in April 2024.

Motorcycle dispatches declined 23 per cent year-on-year at 8,71,666 units in April. Moped wholesales stood at 38,748 units last month, down 8 per cent, as compared to 41,924 units in the year-ago period.

Menon said the two-wheeler segment witnessed a high base effect in April last year, while it is likely to pick up in coming months. Three-wheelers degrew marginally year-on-year to 49,441 units last month, the auto industry smoothly transitioned to the new regulatory regime of second stage of On-Board Diagnostics (OBD).

MINISTRY MUSINGS

51-YEAR DROUGHT ENDS

BCCI looks to adopt Olympic disciplines

GOVT MULLING APPROVAL TO OCI ATHLETES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The BCCI is "keen on adopting two to three Olympic disciplines" in the sports ministry's ambitious plan to have corporate-backed individual Centres of Excellence, the work for which will begin this year.

This was conveyed by the cash-rich cricket body in a meeting with sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya here Thursday. The gathering also featured "representatives from 58 corporate houses".

"Mr Rajeev Shukla, who represented the BCCI in this meeting, said that the Board is willing to adopt two to three Olympic disciplines and would leave it to the ministry to decide what those disciplines would be," a source in the sports ministry said.

"The ministry welcomes this. Our plan is to build Olympic Centres for each sport, which would train 100 to 200 of the very best in the country keeping in mind the current and the next Olympic cycle.

"There were 58 corporates in today's meeting and all of them were keen to support this plan," the source added.

Currently, India has 23 National Centres of Excellence operated by the Sports Authority of India (SAI). Of these, only three are single-sport facilities dedicated to boxing (Rohtak), swimming (Delhi) and shooting (Delhi). The two biggest NCOEs catering to multiple sports are in Patiala and Bengaluru.

Mandaviya has time and again reiterated his commitment to the idea of individual Olympic centres, saying that the inspiration for it has come after observing the functioning of training facilities in Japan, the USA, and Australia.

The BCCI has supported Olympic sports in the past by providing financial assistance to the National Sports Development Fund (Rs 50 crore back in 2008) and to the Indian Olympic Association (Rs 8.5 crore last year before Paris Olympics).

The Board had also given Rs four crore in cash prize



to medal winners of the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2021, including one crore to gold medalist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra.

However, it would be the first time that the Board gets involved in shaping talent if the modalities work out.

A senior BCCI office-bearer did not dwell on the details of Thursday's meeting with Mandaviya, merely saying that, "things would be communicated if anything crystallises."

The OCI conundrum

India's lack of growth in sports like football and tennis has often led to a debate on whether it was a good idea to ban Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) card-holders from representing the country in 2008. Only Indian passport-holders are allowed to compete for the nation.

A ministry source said a revocation of that ban is being considered to ensure that "India's sporting ecosystem can be strengthened".

The discussion is, however, at a very early stage and would involve thorough "exchange of ideas" between the stakeholders.

The deliberation has mainly revolved around football and tennis.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has been particularly keen on allowing OCIs even though there are no major names who can be considered for India even if the ban is revoked.

"It is just a preliminary discussion at this point, it would take a lot of time for anything to move on this front," the source said.

In tennis, the legendary Vijay Amritraj's son Prakash was among the prominent US passport-holders who could not play for India because of the ban on OCI card-holders.

"There is no harm in reconsidering because we would like the best of our talent to be able to represent us. But again, it's a very long road," the source said.

Federations should put house in order

The ministry's thrust on keeping judiciary out of sports governance has continued and it is learnt that Mandaviya has been busy meeting rival factions across different federations to sort their differences.

"The idea is to ensure that judges do not govern sports. That's not the solution. The federation has to be in charge and the ministry is trying its best that fighting doesn't harm athletes or cause litigation," the ministry source stated citing the recent resolution of wrestling's administrative mess that was dragging in court and preventing athletes from competing.

Khelo India Beach Games from May 18

The inaugural Khelo India Beach Games will be held in Diu May 19 to 24. Over 1000 athletes from 36 States and Union Territories are expected to compete here.

Bologna lift Coppa Italia crown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rome, May 15: Bologna ended a 51-year wait for a major trophy when it beat AC Milan 1-0 to win the Italian Cup.

Dan Ndoye returned from injury to score the only goal and help Bologna to its first Italian Cup since 1974. The club, which is owned by Canadian Joey Saputo, has only won two second-division titles in between.

It was also coach Vincenzo Italiano's first win in a final, having lost back-to-back Europa Conference League title matches while in charge of Fiorentina and finishing runner-up in the 2023 Italian Cup.

"They were three hefty disappointments," Italiano told broadcaster Mediaset. "I didn't think I could immediately come back and get my own back. But we succeeded and I'm happy."

"I add an important trophy to my mantlepiece and I truly dedicate it to the guys, who were extraordinary."

Italiano had been flung in the air by his players in celebration immediately after the final whistle. Many of them were in tears of joy, much like some of the thousands of Bologna fans in the stands.

And the 47-year-old coach was eager to get back to the festivities.

"Now let me go and celebrate, because this is something really incredible," Italiano said with a smile at the end of his television interview.

It is Italiano's first season



at Bologna after replacing Thiago Motta, who left to Juventus after steering the team to its first-ever Champions League qualification. Motta was fired by Juventus earlier this season.

The result secured Bologna a spot in next season's Europa League and left Milan with the very real likelihood of missing out on European competition.

It could spell the end of Sérgio Conceição's short stint in charge of the Rossoneri, with Milan eighth in Serie A after a disappointing season.

Both teams came to Rome

looking to end an Italian Cup drought, as Milan last lifted the trophy 22 years ago — losing two finals in the intervening years.

The match was played at a high tempo from the start and both goalkeepers were called into making impressive saves in the opening 10 minutes.

Tension threatened to boil over toward the end of the first half and Bologna captain Lewis Ferguson was left bloodied with what looked like a broken nose after a sliding tackle on Rafael Leão, who caught him on the face with

his leg as he was upended.

Bologna broke the deadlock eight minutes into the second half. Riccardo Orsolini was tackled by Theo Hernández in the area but the ball fell to Ndoye, who carved out some space before curling into the right side of the net.

The 24-year-old Switzerland international had missed Bologna's previous three matches with a thigh injury.

Milan had fought back from a goal down to beat Bologna 3-1 in the Italian league on Friday, but there was to be no such comeback in Rome.

At \$3.6mn, ICC more than doubles prize money for WTC winners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, May 15: The winners of the 2025 World Test Championship will be richer by \$3.6 million, more than double of what was awarded in the previous edition.

Australia had received \$1.6 million for winning the final against India in 2023.

The 2025 final will be played between Australia and South Africa at Lord's from June 11.

The losing finalists will earn \$2.1 million while runners-up of the previous two editions got \$800,000.

"The increase in prize money exhibits the ICC's efforts to prioritise Test cricket as it looks to build on the momentum of



the first three cycles of the nine-team competition," said the ICC in a statement Thursday.

The WTC cycle saw South Africa finish on a high with 2-0 home series wins over Sri Lanka and Pakistan, ending with 69.44 percentage points. Defending champions Australia finished with 67.54 points while India finished with 50.00 after leading

the table for majority of the time. "We are enormously proud to have the opportunity to defend the World Test Championship, especially at Lord's. It's a testament to all those involved across the past two years who have worked incredibly hard to reach the final, which is a great honour for all of us," said Australian captain Pat Cummins.

LA LIGA

Real Madrid beat Mallorca, extend Barca's title wait

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Madrid, May 15: FC Barcelona will have to wait until at least Thursday night to confirm this season's La Liga title after a goal from Real Madrid youngster Jacobo Ramon gave his side a 2-1 win at home to Mallorca Wednesday night.

The B-team player scored with a flick over Mallorca goalkeeper Leo Roman in virtually the last second of a game that looked to be heading for a draw that would have made Barcelona champions before its game at Espanyol Thursday.

Mallorca took the lead against an injury-hit Madrid side when Martin Valjent opened the scoring in the 11th minute.

Endrick, Jude Bellingham and Mbappe all saw efforts saved by Roman, who was Mallorca's best player with 11 saves on the night.

Mbappe finally hit the back of the net midway through the second half, and Madrid kept up the pressure until Ramon's goal that keeps the title race alive for at least 24 hours.

Villarreal moved level on points with fourth-placed Athletic Bilbao with an impressive win at home to Leganes.

Ayoze Perez scored on 22 and 30 minutes to give Villarreal a comfortable lead, with Nicolas Pepe making it 3-0 on the stroke of half-time.

SHORT TAKES

Honour for Gavaskar

Mumbai: India legend Sunil Gavaskar has inaugurated a board room named in his honour at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) headquarters in Mumbai. "Honouring a legend! India great Sunil Gavaskar inaugurates 10000 Gavaskar - a Board Room named in his honour and his iconic milestone at the BCCI HQ in Mumbai," the BCCI shared a video of the event, which saw the presence of the BCCI president Roger Binny, vice-president Rajeev Shukla and secretary Devajit Saikia. "MCA is my mother and BCCI is my father. Thank you so much. I really appreciate the opportunity that I have got to be what I am, thanks to Indian cricket. This is a huge honour. I am very thankful to BCCI for this honour. And I would like to give it all for BCCI... so anytime anything required of me, even at this age, please feel free..." Gavaskar said in the video.

Qinwen ousts Sabalenka

Rome: Zheng Qinwen earned her first victory over top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 6-3 to set up an Italian Open semifinal match against Coco Gauff. The 22-year-old Zheng, the Olympic champion from China, had lost all six previous matches against Sabalenka. The eighth-ranked Zheng saved all five break points she faced and broke Sabalenka's serve three times to reach the last four. Rome is the last big warmup before the French Open starts May 25. Carlos Alcaraz beat Jack Draper 6-4, 6-4 to reach the semifinals. He saved six of the eight break points he faced. The third-ranked Alcaraz, who withdrew from the Madrid tournament due to an upper right leg problem that bothered him during the Barcelona Open final, moved well on the court, often took to the net and used his trademark drop shots and groundstrokes to the best effect.

Neeraj's blunt take on Arshad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, May 15: Seeking to set the record straight, star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra Thursday clarified that he and Arshad Nadeem were never really close friends and said "things won't be the same" after the recent India-Pakistan conflict.

In the aftermath of last month's Pahalgam terror attack, the decorated athlete and his family were bombarded with abuse on social media for inviting Pakistan's Nadeem to the now-postponed NC Classic in Bengaluru.

On the eve of the Diamond League here, the two-time Olympic medallist and reigning world champion put things in perspective when asked about his off-field equation with Nadeem, who won the gold medal in the Paris Games last year after the Indian finished at the top of the podium in the Tokyo edition in 2021.

"First I would like to clarify that I don't have very strong relationship (with Nadeem), we were never really close friends or something. But, because of this (tensions on the Indo-Pak border), it will not be like before. But if someone talks to me respectfully I reciprocate the respect," Chopra told reporters during a press conference.

"Yes, as an athlete we have to talk, I have some good friends from the athlete community from all around the world, not only in javelin throw, but also other events. If somebody talks to me respectfully, I will also talk to him with full respect.."

"Javelin is a very small community and everyone is competing for their country and everyone wants to give their best.."



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Chopra, Jena begin DL campaign in Doha

Celebrated Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will begin his Diamond League campaign here Friday against a familiar but formidable field of rivals, eyeing a perfect start to the season in which he would be defending his world championship crown later this year. At a venue where he will have sizeable crowd support thanks to expatriate Indians, Chopra will face two-time world champion and 2024 Olympics bronze-winner Anderson Peters of Grenada, Jakub Vadlejch of Czechia, who won here in 2024, the German duo of Julian Weber and Max Dehning, Kenya's Julius Yego and Roderick Genki Dean of Japan. Almost all of them have been Chopra's rivals at major competitions for a while now. A notable absentee is 2024 Paris Olympics gold-winner Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan. Chopra's compatriot Kishore Jena, who won a javelin silver medal at the Asian Games but is struggling of late, will also be one of the 11 competitors. Jena (Personal Best: 87.54m) competed here in 2024 as well, finishing ninth with a throw of 76.31m. Vadlejch won here with a best throw of 88.38m while Chopra was 2cm behind with 88.36m. Peters was third with 86.62m. Chopra, who won gold at the Tokyo Olympics and then a silver at the 2024 Paris Games, first competed in the Doha DL in 2018 when he finished fourth with a best throw of 87.43m. After winning gold in the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, he took the title here in 2023 (88.67m) and finished second in 2024 (88.36m). He will be looking to regain the Doha DL title. Chopra, who has a personal best of 89.94m, is looking to hit the 90m mark.

ver-winning star from Haryana had earlier said he was deeply hurt to see his and his family's integrity being questioned in abusive social media posts after an invitation was extended to Nadeem to compete in the tournament

held in his honour. Chopra had then clarified that invites for NC Classic were sent out a day before the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed by terrorists with links to Pakistan.

THAILAND OPEN India's campaign ends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, May 15: India's dismal run in elite international badminton tournaments continued, as all remaining shuttlers, including world number 10 women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand exited early, ending the country's campaign at the Thailand Open Super 500 here Thursday.

Treasa and Gayatri, returned to action following an injury layoff but fell 20-22, 14-21 to Japan's Rui Hirokami and Sayaka Hobara in the second round. With Lakshya Sen having

bowed out in the men's singles opening round Wednesday, Treasa and Gayatri were the last elite Indian players in the fray. The young Indian shuttlers also couldn't make an impact with Unnati Hooda, Malvika Bansod, and Aakarshi Kashyap bowing out after straight-game defeats against higher-ranked opponents.

India is yet to make a final appearance in any BWF World Tour event this year, with top singles players including Lakshya Sen, PV Sindhu, and HS Prannoy battling poor form, injuries, and illness.

'NO EXCUSE'

Mandatory fitness tests for athletes

The decision seems a step in the right direction as India gears up for its official bid for the 2036 Olympic Games



New Delhi, May 15: In a major policy shift aimed at enhancing performance and accountability, the government is planning to implement mandatory fitness tests for all athletes before they are cleared to represent India at major international tournaments, including the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, and the Olympics.

high-stakes competitions, cited a lack of full fitness as a reason for their poor performance. This has raised concerns within the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports about the selection process and the overall preparedness of athletes being sent to global platforms. According to sources familiar with the matter, the government has taken serious note of the issue and is formulating a

framework that would make passing a fitness test a prerequisite for participation. Strict action may also be taken against athletes who fail to comply or bypass the process. "Many athletes go to big events like the Olympics or Asian Games, and when they underperform, they say they were not 100 percent fit. This is not acceptable. The government is looking into this and will soon mandate fitness tests before any major event," sources said. The fitness evaluations will be sport-specific and conducted under the supervision of designated medical and training professionals. The initiative is being seen as a step towards building a more disciplined and performance-driven sports ecosystem in the country.