



## Janhvi's reply

Actor Janhvi Kapoor finally shuts down plastic surgery rumours with a blunt, no-nonsense response to critics

LEISURE | P2



## CBI chargesheets Malik

CBI files chargesheet against former J&K governor Satyapal Malik and others over alleged corruption in Kiru hydropower project

NATIONAL | P9



## India-UK FTA talks

UK agrees to accord non-discriminatory treatment to Indian companies in its public procurement system

BUSINESS | P11



## Tottenham triumph

Tottenham beat Manchester United 1-0 to win the Europa League final and lift its first European trophy in more than four decades

SPORTS | P12

# CM unveils, lays stones for ₹1.15L-crore projects

**Jajpur, May 22:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday inaugurated and laid foundation stones for 24 industrial projects in this district with a total investment of ₹1.15 lakh crore which are expected to generate employment opportunities for 36,000 people. Taking part at a function here, the CM inaugurated four projects, including Tata Steel Limited's 5 MTPA Integrated Steel Plant expansion at Kalinga Nagar industrial hub with an investment of ₹47,599 crore. The project is expected to create 4,625 jobs. Other projects the CM inaugurated are: JSL Group's petroleum and solar power venture (Rs 470 crore), Jatia Steel Limited's 0.75 MTPA TMT Rebar-cum-Wire Rod Mill (Rs 220 crore) and Abis Exports India Private Limited's poultry feed plant (Rs 161.57 crore). Majhi also laid the foundation stones for 20 industrial projects. Among them is Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited's 8.52 MTPA

steel plant expansion at an investment of ₹61,769 crore. This unit is poised to become one of the largest steel manufacturing facilities in the region and is expected to create 14,000 direct jobs, an official said. "Together, these 24 projects will not only bring foreign capital and cutting-edge technology to Odisha, but also serve as a catalyst for job creation, MSME collaboration, and downstream industrial growth in the region," an official said, adding that the state is emerging as a trusted destination for both domestic and international investors. Addressing the gathering, Majhi said, "Today, Odisha stands at a historic turning point. With the inauguration and groundbreaking of industrial projects worth ₹1.15 lakh crore in Jajpur, we are not merely laying foundation stones, we are building the future. Now, 36,000 employment opportunities are being created, ensuring that our youth can grow with pride in their own land." P3



**RIOT OF COLOURS:** Participants fly giant kites during a festival at Mannavanur Lake meadows, near Kodaikanal, in Dindigul district, Thursday. Organised for the first time in the region, the event features uniquely shaped kites, including those resembling a dragon, lily pad, Jallikattu bull, and the Indian national flag

## 16-member Kotia panel

**Bhubaneswar:** The state government Thursday formed a 16-member committee, with Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) Minister Suresh Pujari as chairman, to look into the issues concerning the Kotia group of villages under Pottangi block in Koraput. Other members of the panel include R&DM department ACS, Home department ACS, Koraput Collector and the district's SP. The committee is tasked with defining a special agency structure, its hierarchical and funding patterns, ensuring convergence of various development schemes, and conducting a comparative analysis of similar schemes offered by the bordering state (Andhra Pradesh) to support the development of the Kotia Gram Panchayat.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



**How can he donate? His blood isn't normal - it's sindoor!**

# ED crossing all limits: SC

*The Enforcement Directorate (ED) once again came under the scanner of the Supreme Court which called out the excessive methods applied by the agency in making out cases under PMLA. "Your ED is crossing all limits," a top court bench of Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, while issuing notice to the anti-money laundering probe agency on a plea filed by the Tamil Nadu government and Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC). Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK welcomed the SC order, saying the stay is a 'big blow' to alleged efforts by the BJP to malign the party-led government in the state and that the ED was a 'blackmailing organisation'.*

**New Delhi/Chennai, May 22:** The Supreme Court Thursday rapped the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and stayed its money laundering probe against Tamil Nadu's state-run liquor retailer TASMAC over alleged corruption in grant of

wine shop licences, observing the Central agency is 'crossing all limits' and violating the federal concept of governance. "Your ED is crossing all limits," a bench comprising Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, while issuing notice to the anti-money laundering probe agency on a plea filed by the Tamil Nadu government and Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC). Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK welcomed the SC order, saying the stay is a 'big blow' to alleged efforts by the BJP to malign the party-led government in the state and that the ED was a 'blackmailing organisation'. This is not the first time that the ED has come under fire from the SC. The ED has previously been pulled up by several benches of the SC for allegedly misusing the provisions of PMLA. Opposition parties, too, have protested against the alleged abuse of PMLA provisions by the Central agency against the government's political opponents.



**Tiwari, appearing for the state government and the TASMAC, and stayed ED's probe against TASMAC in the meantime.** Raju opposed the order, saying the issue involved corruption of over ₹1,000 crore and the ED is not crossing limits 'at least in this case'. Sibal said that it is the state and the TASMAC which have launched criminal prosecution into alleged illegalities in granting liquor shop licenses. He said as many as 41 FIRs were lodged against purported wrongdoers in cases related to the allotment of liquor shop licences from 2014 and now the ED jumps in the picture and raids the TASMAC. "How can you raid the state-run TASMAC?" the CJJI asked. The DMK government and TASMAC moved the SC against the raids conducted by the ED on the premises of the liquor retailer. The petition challenged an April 23 order of the Madras High Court that upheld the ED's actions, alleging grave violations of constitutional rights

# STATE GOVT PLANS TO BUY SC, ST LAND

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** The state government is planning to purchase land directly from people belonging to SC and ST communities to prevent them from being exploited during financial emergencies, Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) Minister Suresh Pujari said Thursday. Pujari said a corpus fund would be created to facilitate these land purchases and protect marginalised communities from being forced to sell their properties at throw-away prices to wealthy individuals, middlemen, or influential groups. "SC and ST individuals often face administrative hurdles when they need to sell their land in times of need, despite existing legal protections," the minister said, adding, "Because of these barriers, regular buyers hesitate, leaving room for affluent and powerful groups to exploit the situation." To ensure fair land transactions and prevent distress sales, the government intends to step in as a buyer. "This move will not only protect vulnerable landowners from exploitation but will also allow them the opportunity to reclaim their land in future," Pujari said.

He said that a high-level committee has already been formed under the chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary of R&DM department. The committee will study the issue and submit its report. Additionally, feedback will be gathered from SC and ST organisations, political parties, the House Committee on SC/ST Development, and legislators. The final decision will be made based on the committee's report and stakeholder consultations, Pujari added. He said the government will purchase land from individuals who wish to sell it to cover expenses such as their daughter's marriage, medical treatment, or their children's higher education. The government will hold the land for a period of two to three years, keeping it secured. If the original owner wants to reclaim the land within that timeframe, they will be allowed to repurchase it from the government. However, if the original owner does not wish to reclaim the land, any property previously owned by STs will only be auctioned off to others from the same community.

## 2 Israeli Embassy staffers shot dead in US

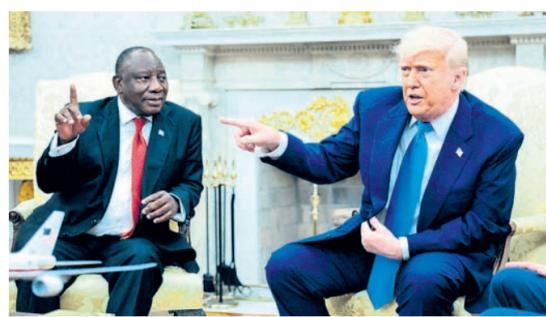
**Washington, May 22:** Two staff members of the Israeli Embassy in Washington were shot and killed Wednesday evening while leaving an event at a Jewish museum, and the suspect yelled, "Free, free Palestine" after he was arrested, police said. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar identified the victims as Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim. Lischinsky was a research assistant, and Milgrim organised visits and missions to Israel. They were leaving an event at the Capital Jewish Museum when the suspect approached a group of four people and opened fire, Metropolitan Police Chief Pamela Smith said at a news conference. The suspect, identified as Elias Rodriguez, 30, of Chicago, was observed pacing outside the museum before the shooting, walked into the museum after

the shooting and was detained by event security, Smith said. When he was taken into custody, the suspect began chanting, "Free, free Palestine," Smith said. She said law enforcement did not believe there was an ongoing threat to the community. The stunning attack prompted Israeli missions to step up their security. The shooting comes as Israel has launched another major offensive in the Gaza Strip in a war with Hamas that has heightened tensions across the Middle East and internationally. "These horrible DC killings, based obviously on antisemitism, must end, NOW!" President Donald Trump posted on social media early Thursday. "Hatred and Radicalism have no place in the USA." Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday that he was 'shocked' by the 'horrific, antisemitic' shooting.

# Oval Office turns 'ambush office' for world leaders

**Washington, May 22:** For world leaders an invitation to the Oval Office used to be a coveted prize. Under Donald Trump it's become a ticket to a brutal political ambush. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa became the latest victim in a long line that started with Trump's notorious row with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy in February. Trump has turned what were staid diplomatic 'photo sprays' under his predecessor Joe Biden into punishing, hour-long tests of nerve in the heart of the US presidency, played out on live television. The sight has become all too familiar - a world leader perched nervously on the edge of their gold-upholstered chair in front of the famed fireplace,

waiting to see what happens. Will the 78-year-old Republican lay on the charm? Will he show off the new gold-plated decor he has been proudly installing in the Oval? Will he challenge his guest on tariffs or trade or US military assistance? Or will he simply tear into them? Nobody knows before they get there. All they know is that when the cameras are allowed into the most exclusive room in the White House, they will be treading the most perilous of political tightropes. And the hot, confined space of the Oval Office adds to the pressure-cooker environment as the unpredictable billionaire seeks to wrongfoot his guests and gain the upper hand. Trump set the benchmark when he hosted Zelenskyy February 28. Tensions over Trump's



sudden pivot towards Russia spilled into the open as a red-faced US president berated the Ukrainian leader and accused him of being ungrateful for US military aid against Russia. Many wondered if it was a deliberate ambush - especially as Vice President JD Vance ap-

peared to step in to trigger the row. Whether or not it was on purpose, the goal in foreign capitals ever since has been to 'avoid a Zelenskyy'. But Ramaphosa's visit to the Oval Wednesday was the closest yet to a repeat - and this time it was clearly planned. Ramaphosa arrived with top

South African golfers Ernie Els and Retief Goosen in tow, hoping to take the edge off the golf-mad Trump's unfounded claims of a 'genocide' against white South African farmers. But his face was a picture of bemusement when after a question on the issue, Trump suddenly said to aides and said, "Turn the lights down, and just put this on." A video of South African politicians chanting 'kill the farmer' began to play on a screen set up at the side of the room. A stunned Ramaphosa looked at the screen, then at Trump, and then back at the screen. Yet unlike Zelenskyy, who argued back with an increasingly enraged Trump, the South African president largely stayed calm as he argued his case. Nor was he asked to leave the White House as Zelenskyy was, causing the Ukrainian to miss lunch.

# leisure



## JOEY KING IN TALKS FOR PRACTICAL MAGIC 2

Joey King is reportedly in negotiations to join *Practical Magic 2*, playing the daughter of Sandra Bullock's character. The sequel will see Bullock and Nicole Kidman reprise their roles as witch sisters Sally and Gillian Owens, continuing the story of their enchanted family legacy and magical lineage.

## MILEY CYRUS TALKS ABOUT TRAUMATIC HEALTH SCARE

Pop icon Miley Cyrus has recently opened up about a terrifying health scare that nearly caused her to step away from the music industry. Cyrus revealed that she suffered a painful ovarian cyst rupture during a live performance on New Year's Eve in 2023, an incident that shook her to the core.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You have your hands full today. There will be planning, meetings and a lot of work to do. You may feel tired and dejected due to insufficient inputs from others. However, Ganesha says things will become clear slowly as matters come to a conclusion.

**TAURUS**  
You may feel let down as your folks may not extend the support you expected from them, says Ganesha. You should try to remain practical and not get swayed by emotions. It is highly likely that family feuds may erupt today. Ganesha advises you to avoid confrontations and keep smiling to emerge a winner.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you will decide to become a bit more conscious about your health. You may or may not enrol yourself into a gym and measure your calories, but you will be concerned about your lifestyle and food habits today, predicts Ganesha. That's quite unlike a Piscean.

**CANCER**  
Today, you are likely to be brimming with love and compassion. However, certain negative thoughts will spoil all your good work. Don't fret! Your efforts won't go wasted and you will get the desired results sooner or later, says Ganesha.

**LEO**  
Working hard, or hardly working — there is a vast difference between the two. You would be wiser to be working hard today, especially if it is success that you desire, says Ganesha. Remember that there is no substitute for hard work, and the sooner you realise this, the better. So sweat it out today. Also, hardwork always pays its dividends, so, after a long day at work, you can look forward to an enchanting evening with your love.

**VIRGO**  
The bulb of ideas will burn bright today. A possible see-saw between your contractual obligation and current duties may baffle you. New contacts will stand you in good stead. Blood will prove thicker, and family and friends will consolidate their place in your life.

**LIBRA**  
Your instincts are at their peak today. Generally, this means a lot of good, but for you, it may also mean having to put up with the trouble of small things bothering you in a big way. So, it becomes highly important for you to remain balanced and focused.

**SCORPIO**  
Ganesha predicts today will be a day full of focus and a clear thought process. The clarity of thought you have has been acquired over a period of time, says Ganesha, and that could make all the difference. A crisp application of thoughts to ideas and actions will bring much appreciation from bosses and peers.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Settling for a new, better employment will help you fast-track your career growth. A telephonic interview might ring in a new offer. A lucrative deal with an MNC would serve well. Your dedication and devotion to work will also peak today, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will find the day to be taxing, mostly because of the amount of work delegated to you, says Ganesha. But it will take trouble quite an effort to dampen your spirit. You will be in the fray in the latter part of the day, but will leave your rivals trailing behind in terms of business strategies.

**AQUARIUS**  
You may huff and puff, but today is not the day when you'll finish what you started. Don't lose heart, the future is promising. Take a break, says Ganesha, you've worked enough. The results are on the way.

**PISCES**  
You are likely to be grinding yourself under at the workplace today. A turning point will arise in romantic liaisons, though if the evening awaiting you is anything to go by, it is something you should welcome wholeheartedly, says Ganesha.

# Aish Cannes look creates buzz

**New Delhi:** Former Miss World, actor and Cannes regular for over 20 years, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan once again owned the red carpet of the film festival gala in a Manish Malhotra ivory saree. But what got everyone talking, both online and elsewhere, was the vivid 'sindoor' in her hair parting.

Was it a subtle homage to Operation Sindoor, sindoor a key word at the centre of impassioned discourse across drawing rooms, offices and social media platforms? Was it her way of silencing long rumours with hus-Abhishek chan? Or part of careful-curatio-ivo-and red



look, complemented by Malhotra's custom ruby jewellery?

The questions burst forth back home almost as soon as Aishwarya descended on the Croisette steps Wednesday evening in Cannes and her photographs and videos went into rapid circulation.

Thursday, Malhotra re-shared a post on his Instagram Story which linked Aishwarya's look to Operation Sindoor.

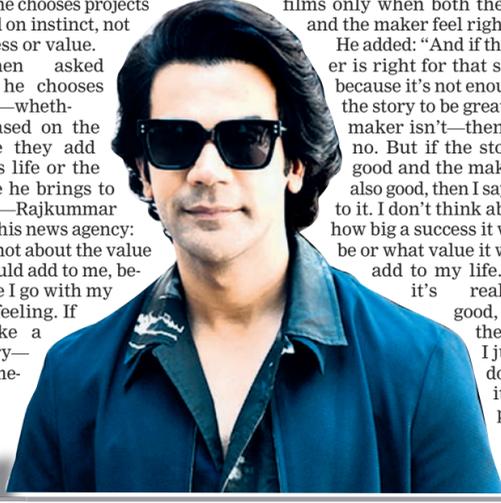
Then there were some who called it a celebration of Sanatan culture. "The Queen of Cannes! Aishwarya owns it like no one. Wearing Sindoor at the international platform empowers all the woman who still love to wear it, celebrating Sanatan culture," read a post on X.

One post left the debate open. "What's your take- Aishwarya Rai flaunting sindoor is : A) a nod to Operation Sindoor B) a gesture to stop separation rumours C) just a fashion statement." PTI

# Rajkummar: I go with my gut feeling

**Mumbai:** National Award-winning star Rajkummar Rao says he chooses projects based on instinct, not success or value.

When asked how he chooses films—whether based on the value they add to his life or the value he brings to them—Rajkummar told this news agency: "It's not about the value it would add to me, because I go with my gut feeling. If I like a story—some-



# Janhvi hits back at haters



**Mumbai:** Actor Janhvi Kapoor, currently at the Cannes Film Festival, has finally shut down speculation about her looks with a blunt and cheeky response.

For years, the actor has faced constant scrutiny over alleged plastic surgery. Now, in a behind-the-scenes video that's gone viral, Janhvi addressed the chatter head-on. While getting ready for an appearance, she looked into the camera and said, "I look mesmerising. I look breathtaking. I cannot wait to eat." She then added with a smirk, "They are going to say it is plastic, but who cares?"—a remark that

drew laughter from her glam squad and sent a clear message to her critics.

Last year, her sister Khushi Kapoor made headlines when she revealed that she had undergone cosmetic surgery, including a nose job and fillers.

Janhvi is in Cannes to promote *Homebound*, a film directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, also starring Ishaan Khatter and Vishal Jethwa. The story follows two friends from a North Indian village whose bond is tested after they join the police force.

The film was screened in the Un Certain Regard section of the festival and received a nine-minute standing ovation. Martin Scorsese serves as the executive producer, with Karan Johar, Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, and Somen Mishra producing. Co-producers include Marijke de Souza and Melita Toscan Du Plantier.

AGENCIES

# Mandira bats for mental health



**Mumbai:** Actor-host Mandira Bedi Thursday said she has joined the mental and emotional wellness platform Full Circle as co-founder.

The actor, known for TV shows such as *Shanti*, *Ghar Jamai*, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* as well as films such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Dus Kahaniyaan*, has been a fitness enthusiast for years now.

Full Circle is a modern mental wellness space dedicated to helping individuals navigate life's challenges through access to qualified professionals, curated support systems, and evidence-based practices, a press release issued here said.

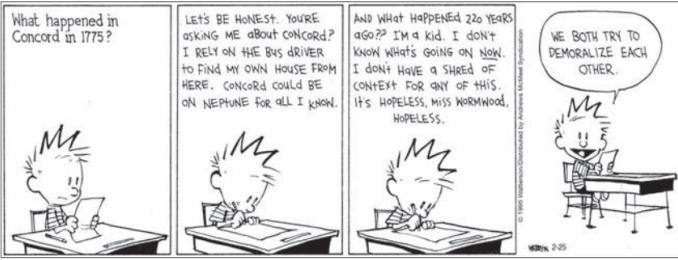
As co-founder, Bedi will play an active role in shaping the platform's vision, curating experiences, and encouraging more people to take charge of their mental well-being.

"I've spent years advocating for physical fitness, but the last few years have shown me just how vital mental health is. Full Circle is a platform that truly resonates with me, it's a space where people can find the support they need from professionals, when they need it most. Healing into wholeness isn't just a philosophy, it's a necessity and I'm honoured to be a part of this journey," she said in a statement. PTI

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

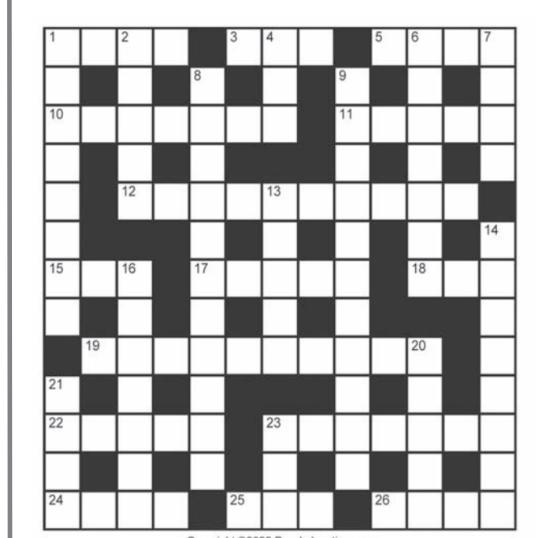


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Remote button
  - 3 Barbary beast
  - 5 Verdi opera
  - 10 Passion
  - 11 Deadly snake
  - 12 Letter closer (5,5)
  - 15 Mythical bird
  - 17 Goad (3,2)
  - 18 Collector's goal
  - 19 Mountain peak in the Alps
  - 22 Judicious
  - 23 Words to a sad sack (5,2)
  - 24 Paddles
  - 25 Flowery verse
  - 26 Cried
- Down**
- 1 Scarves
  - 2 Late
  - 4 Average
  - 6 African antelopes
  - 7 Haywire
  - 8 Film maker's offering
  - 9 Again and again (4,3,4)
  - 13 Some sweet lumps
  - 14 Poker decision (5,3)
  - 16 Before music or pot
  - 20 Hospital figure
  - 21 Capital on a fjord
  - 23 Bounder

### 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.

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

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | L | M | S | M | E | R | C | U | R | Y |
| S | U | A | A | U | L | A |   |   |   |   |
| T | A | N | A | G | E | R | M | I | S | E |
| R | C | A |   | O | T | T | E | N |   |   |
| A | C | H | E | S | T | R | I | D | E | L |
| N |   |   |   | I | R | R | E | U |   |   |
| G | A | P | E | E | L | F | A | S | P | S |
| E | R | P | T |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| P | I | C | A | S | S | O | L | D |   |   |
| F | N | R |   | O | G | G |   |   |   |   |
| A | C | T | O | R |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| T | E | O | R | O | E | R |   |   |   |   |
| E | R | R | A | T | I | C |   |   |   |   |
| E | A | S | E |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**SUDOKU**

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

An ORMAS stall of handicraft and traditional Odia food items opens at Cuttack railway station Thursday



# downtown

## CM lays stones for ₹231cr FDI projects in Jajpur dist

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** The state government's renewed focus on attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) seems to have paid off with Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday conducting the groundbreaking ceremonies for FDI projects worth over ₹231 crore in Jajpur district.

While the CM inaugurated and laid foundation stones for projects worth ₹1.15 lakh crore in Jajpur, some investments from Germany, Japan, the UK, and the US were part of the groundbreaking ceremonies.

According to an official statement, TYK Ceramics India Pvt Ltd, a Japanese firm, will invest ₹57 crore to manufacture advanced refractory products for steelmaking, bolstering local production and technology.

Similarly, Almamet India Private Limited, a German multinational, is investing ₹50.6 crore to establish a unit for magnesium granules and calcium carbide, contributing to the state's speciality chemical sector, it said.

The statement also said Neo Industries Metal Processing Pvt Ltd from the US will pump in ₹72 crore in chrome plating and steel surface finishing, improving steel quality and enhancing



| HIGHLIGHTS                                   |         |
|--|---------|
| TYK Ceramics India Pvt Ltd (Japan)           | ₹57cr   |
| Almamet India Private Limited (Germany)      | ₹50.6cr |
| Neo Industries Metal Processing Pvt Ltd (US) | ₹72cr   |
| Corewire Surface Technology Pvt Ltd (UK)     | ₹50.1cr |
| Lechler India Pvt Ltd (Germany)              | ₹1.5cr  |

the state's value-added manufacturing capabilities.

Corewire Surface Technology Pvt Ltd from United Kingdom (UK) will invest ₹50.1 crore in a facility for rebuilding steel rolls, strengthening the metallurgical supply chain.

Lechler India Pvt Ltd, another German firm, is setting up a

precision nozzle and steel fabrication unit with an investment of ₹1.5 crore, promoting cleaner and more efficient industrial processes, it added.

Majhi also laid the foundation stone of Odisha-origin IMFA's expansion plant at Kalinga Nagar.

The facility will produce 1,00,000 tonne ferrochrome annually. The first phase is expected to be completed by the first quarter of the 2026-27 fiscal, and the plant will feature cutting-edge technology, a company official said.

The plant will complement its integrated sites at Choudwar and Therubali—enhancing its total production capacity to 3,84,000 tonnes and reinforcing its position as India's leading producer of value-added ferro chrome, IMFA Managing Director Subhrajit Panda said.

## Super specialty care at ESI Hosp in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** Labour and Employees' State Insurance Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia inaugurated a super specialty outpatient department (OPD) at the ESI Hospital here Thursday, bringing cheers to lakhs of government employees and their families registered under Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act, 1948.

The facility, developed in collaboration with Hi-Tech Medical College and Hospital, Bhubaneswar, offers advanced treatments for urology, cardiology, oncology, neurosurgery, nephrology, neurology, and endocrinology patients. The services are provided free of cost to insured employees and their families.

The ESI scheme, active in Odisha since 1960, currently serves around 10 lakh insured employees through four hospitals and 53 dispensaries, with five more hospitals proposed. Keeping in view the rise in lifestyle diseases like kidney and heart ailments, the scheme has partnered with 12 secondary care and 15 tertiary care centres for enhanced treatment access.

A dialysis unit has also been introduced at the ESI Hospital here.

"The state government reaffirmed its commitment to offering comprehensive and accessible healthcare services to all ESIS beneficiaries," said the minister after inaugurating the facility.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL

MULTI-PARTY DELEGATION



## Fresh Covid-19 case after 2-and-a-half yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** A fresh Covid-19 case has been detected in the state after a gap of two-and-a-half years, and the condition of the patient is stable, a senior government official said here Thursday.

Responding to media queries, Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Secretary S Thrusday advised people not to panic about the sporadic appearance of Covid cases in the state. "The patient is stable at present but the only concern is that the infected person has several comorbid conditions," she said.

**Health and Family Welfare dept advised people not to panic about the sporadic appearance of Covid cases in the state**

has been asked to monitor the situation and we are alert," she stated.

As per available information, sporadic Covid-19 cases are being detected in various parts of India and the patients are found infected with a mild strain, with the possibility of severity being very low, the secretary said.

"We have nothing to worry. We are monitoring the situation and are waiting for a fresh advisory from the Centre or the NCDC. Once we get it, we will take necessary steps accordingly," Aswathy said. She said no advisory has been issued for the public so far.

"The situation is completely under control and there is no need to worry," she claimed. According to sources, the Covid-infected patient is undergoing treatment at a private hospital here.

As per Covid dashboard of the state government, 26 cases were detected in the state November 8, 2022.

## Clean bank premises: HC to loan defaulter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, May 22:** In an unusual order, the Orissa High Court has granted bail to a bank loan defaulter on the condition that she cleans the premises of a bank branch for two hours daily over two months.

The order was issued Tuesday by a vacation bench of Justice SK Panigrahi, who directed city resident Manogyan Patnaik to clean ICICI Bank's Link Road Branch everyday

from 8am to 10am for a period of two months.

Patnaik had been in custody since her arrest February 5 by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the state Crime Branch.

She was accused of fraudulently availing multiple loans from ICICI Bank and Indian Bank by mortgaging the same residential property multiple times, and later selling the mortgaged property to another person, who also took a loan

on it via an internal balance transfer.

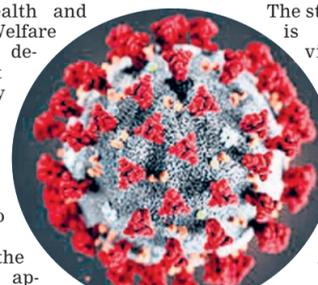
Without going into the merits of the case, Justice Panigrahi allowed Patnaik's bail application and directed that the petitioner be released on bail with some stringent terms and conditions as deemed just and proper by the trial court along with the conditions set by the High Court.

The HC asked the petitioner not to indulge in any criminal offence while on bail and

should not tamper with the evidence of the prosecution in any manner.

"The petitioner shall approach the ICICI Bank and clean the bank premises," the order said, adding that the violation of the conditions shall entail cancellation of the bail.

The HC has also asked the local police, in coordination with the bank authorities, to monitor whether the petitioner is adhering to the bail conditions or not.



The state government is keeping strict vigil, and closely monitoring the changing conditions. The government machinery is in all alertness for countering any situation, Aswathy added. Till now, neither the Union government nor the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has issued any advisory Covid-19 transmission, the H&FW secretary said.

"The Health department

## Raja Ram Mohan Roy remembered

**Bhubaneswar:** Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Naveen Patnaik Thursday paid tributes to Raja Ram Mohan Roy on the social reformer's birth anniversary. They recalled Roy's fight against orthodoxy and religious bigotry. "Hon'ble Governor Shri @DrHariBabuK paid tributes to Raja Ram Mohan Roy on his birth anniversary. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's enduring vision for social justice, women empowerment, and education continues to light the way for India's progress," a post on the Governor's official X handle stated. Majhi, in a social media post, said, "Tribute to visionary reformer and pioneer of modern Indian society, #RajaRamMohanRoy on his birth anniversary. His relentless efforts towards social justice, women's empowerment, and education continue to inspire generations." Patnaik, in a post, said, "Humble tributes to great social, educational and religious reformer #RajaRamMohanRoy on his birth anniversary. He will always be remembered for his progressive vision, contribution towards women empowerment, modern education as well as crusade against orthodoxy and religious bigotry."



## BJD forms Disciplinary Action Committee

**Bhubaneswar:** BJD President Naveen Patnaik has constituted a new seven-member state-level Disciplinary Action Committee to help maintain internal discipline and unity within the party. Senior party leader Debi Prasad Mishra will chair the committee. He is joined by PK Amat, Chandrasekhar Sahoo, and Rajashree Mallick. The committee also includes younger leaders like Sarada Prasanna Jena, Sarmistha Sethi, and Lopamudra Baxipatra, a release stated.

## Bengal man held for ₹73.62L cyber fraud

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** A 26-year-old man from West Bengal has been arrested for allegedly duping an Odisha man of more than ₹73 lakh in a 'digital arrest' fraud, police said Thursday.

Based on a complaint lodged by a man from Paradip at a cyber crime police station May 15, a team of the state Crime Branch arrested the accused, a native of Howrah district in neighbouring West Bengal, Wednesday, a senior officer said.

The complainant said cyber fraudsters called him, impersonating CBI and Delhi Police personnel and said a parcel, booked in his name, had been confiscated by Delhi customs.

According to the complainant from Paradip, he was asked to pay ₹73.62 lakh to prove himself innocent, and otherwise, legal action would be taken against him.

"Thus, the complainant was put under 'digital arrest' and he finally transferred ₹73.62 lakh to the fraudsters' account," the CB officer said.

"Digital arrest" is a new cyber fraud trick, where an accused poses as a law enforcement agency official, like a CBI or customs sleuth, and threatens people of arrest by making calls.

The police seized various incriminating articles, including a mobile phone, SIM cards, Aadhaar cards and bank accounts of the fraudsters, the officer said.

## Campus poll: Students, outfits welcome plans

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** Students and various student organisations have welcomed the state government's plans to resume elections in colleges and universities in the state after a gap of seven years.

Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj Wednesday said that following the Chief Minister's nod for resumption of campus polls, preparations are on to finalise the timing and modalities.

"The government is considering conducting students' union elections this year. Keeping that in mind, we are trying to cover the syllabus before Durga Puja so that studies won't be affected," Suraj said.

Hailing the government move, Smita Mishra, a BBA stu-

dent at Ravenshaw University said students' union elections will resolve many grassroots issues in the campus. "Also it was much needed to produce better leaders for the future," she said.

Echoing similar sentiments, Tejeshwar Behera, a Post Graduation History student at Vani Vihar said, "Though we welcome the decision, the government, at the same time, should ensure that no violence takes place during the elections. Otherwise, our studies will be affected."

Meanwhile, various students' bodies have welcomed the plans, albeit skepticism.

Biswapatap Sahoo, working president of Biju Chatra Janata Dal (BCJD) said, "BJP is a U-turn party. Their ministers are in the habit of doing the opposite of

what they say. There are many instances when BJP takes a decision and reverses it later."

Sahoo however, said the outfit is nevertheless, prepared for the elections. "BCJD is ready for students' union elections. We are always with the students. We will secure landslide victory if the elections are conducted in fair way," he said.

National Students' Union of India (NSUI) state president Udit Pradhan said, "We welcome this initiative of the state government. The voices of students have been muted for the past seven years by the BJD and BJP governments. The present generation students need to be politically educated so that the country can produce great leaders. We are ready for the elections," he said.

He, however, cautioned that

NSUI would stage all-out protests if the government develops a cold feet over the plans. "This government has a tendency to take U-turns. We will stage massive agitations if it fails to conduct the students' union election this year," he said.

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) National Executive Council member Biswajeet Patra said, "It was the demand of ABVP for the past seven years to hold students' election which now will be fulfilled." Taking a dig at the previous state government, Patra said, "When BJD was in power, it cancelled the student elections to stop the evolution of youth leaders for their political benefits. That will end now. The campus elections will shape the student leadership landscape in the state."

## Odisha leads in conservation of Olive Ridley turtles

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** As the people across the globe celebrate the 'World Turtle Day' today, the remarkable conservation of the endangered Olive Ridley turtles by Odisha has set a benchmark for wild-life protection and preservation efforts.

In fact, Odisha has secured a key place for turtle conservation, especially in playing host to one of the world's largest mass nesting events, called 'Arribadas', for the sea giants at the state's coastal stretches of Gahirmatha as well as Rushikulya, and Devi River mouth.

In 2025, Odisha recorded unprecedented nesting figures, reflecting the success of ongoing conservation efforts. At

Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, 6.6 lakh Olive Ridley turtles arrived for mass nesting. Similarly, the Rushikulya rookery in Ganjam witnessed a historic turnout with nearly seven lakh turtles nesting. A second phase of mass nesting at Rushikulya River mouth added over two lakh more mass nesting.

Rahul M Suresh, a researcher at Dakshin foundation, which is dedicated to promote and conserve India's coastal, marine, and mountain ecosystems, said, "There are three places in the world where Olive Ridelies display mass nesting phenomenon - Ostional beach on the Nicoya Peninsula, and Nancite beach in Santa Rosa National Park (both in Costa Rica), and Odisha's coast (Gahirmatha, Rushikulya and at Devi River mouth)."



Suresh said what draws the Olive Ridelies towards Odisha beaches is the favourable nesting conditions. "These turtles prefer fresh sandy beaches. The

dynamic beaches at Rushikulya River mouth provide a preferable condition to lay eggs," he said.

Climate expert Ranjan Pan-

da, also known as Odisha's warden, emphasised individual responsibility in turtle conservation efforts. "We must keep our beaches clean and avoid overcrowding these sensitive zones in the name of tourism," he said. Panda also urged immediate action to reduce ocean pollution that poses a threat to marine ecosystems.

Environmentalist Sovakar Behera, former honorary wild-life warden of Puri, raised concerns about Devi River mouth where mass nesting has drastically declined since 1997. He attributed the phenomenon to trawler activity, coastal disturbances following the 1999 super cyclone, and increasing pollution from shrimp farming and artificial lighting.

Every year May 23, the World Turtle Day is celebrated to raise

awareness about the conservation of turtles and tortoises, and the threats they face. The initiative was first launched in 2000 by the American Tortoise Rescue (ATR), a non-profit dedicated to their rescue and protection.

This year's theme, 'Dancing Turtles Rock,' encourages people to celebrate turtles through creative expressions such as art, dance, and social media outreach, reinforcing the message of conservation with a joyful spirit.

As Odisha continues to make headlines for its conservation efforts, World Turtle Day serves as a timely reminder of the shared responsibility to protect these ancient mariners and their fragile habitats for today and future generations, conservationists said.

INT'L DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Harmony with nature key to sustainable future: Min



Over 7,200 local committees working to document and conserve nature. Forest cover of 36.71% plays crucial role in climate resilience.

amphibians. It is also home to endangered species such as the Olive Ridley turtle and the Irrawaddy dolphin.

The minister added that Odisha's forest and tree cover stands at 36.71 per cent, spread over 57,160 square kilometres, playing a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance and mitigating climate change.

He also praised the Odisha State Biodiversity Board, established in 2009, for promoting biodiversity conservation through awareness and public participation.

More than 7,200 Biodiversity Management Committees across Gram Panchayats are actively documenting local biodiversity and encouraging its sustainable use, the minister said.

Concluding his speech, Singhunia urged citizens—especially students—to adopt a lifestyle that values and protects nature. Collective effort, he said, is key to securing a healthy, sustainable planet for future generations.

Minister Ganesh Ram Singhunia urges sustainable resource use and eco-friendly lifestyles to protect the state's rich natural heritage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singhunia Thursday emphasised that living in harmony with nature is essential to ensuring a better quality of life and a sustainable future for the people of Odisha.

Addressing the state-level celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity at the Lok Seva Bhawan Convention Centre, the minister highlighted the urgent need to pro-

tect Odisha's rich biodiversity. He stressed responsible use of natural resources—land, water, forests, and wildlife—to preserve them for future generations.

This year's theme, "Harmony with Nature and its Sustainable Development," underscores the vital role biodiversity plays in supporting human life. Singhunia noted that biodiversity has always been central to civilisation, providing essentials like food, medicine, clothing, energy, and shelter.

He said Odisha, with its diverse geography from the Eastern Ghats to the Bay of Bengal, is among India's most biodiverse states. The region hosts over 5,000 species of plants and fungi—including orchids, sea grasses, and mangroves—as well as numerous species of birds, reptiles, mammals, and



INSPIRING PERFORMANCE: A visually-challenged artiste performs at Grishma Utsav 2025, organised by Swetapadma Sangeetalya Cultural Trust at Geeta Govinda Sadan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

Governor reviews devpt work in Khurda

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati conducted a high-level review of development initiatives in Khurda district at the zilla parishad conference hall here Thursday. The review focused on the implementation of Central and state welfare schemes and development projects across key sectors such as health, agriculture, tourism, water resources, and rural infrastructure.

The Governor assessed the Central schemes such as



Ayushman Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, PM Gram Sadak Yojana, and the Jal Jeevan Mission. While expressing satisfaction with overall progress, he emphasised the need for faster execution, particularly in achieving 100 per cent tap water coverage under the Jal Jeevan

Mission. Currently, about 70 per cent of households in the district have pipe water supply.

Kambhampati also flagged delays in some large-scale projects and urged the administration to address bottlenecks to ensure timely completion. Acknowledging Khurda's stra-

tegic importance as the Capital district, he stressed its role in setting a development benchmark for the state.

Highlighting industrial growth, the Governor noted that 21 industrial estates are under development in the district, encouraging youth to take advantage of available infrastructure and support for MSMEs.

He also praised the promotion of Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana and called on citizens to leverage rooftop solar subsidies for long-term savings.

Odisha Yatri app hits 2 lakh trips

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The Odisha Yatri app, launched by the State Transport department in January 2025, has achieved a significant milestone, completing over 2 lakh trips within just five months. Designed as a no-commission government cab platform, the app has enabled more than 10,000 registered drivers to collectively earn over ₹2 crore.

According to reports, drivers in the Capital region have earned over ₹2.5 crore, while those in Cuttack have earned ₹5.9 lakh. By eliminating commission fees, the Odisha Yatri platform has significantly boosted drivers' incomes, making it a preferred alternative to private cab aggregators. The app has also earned strong public trust by prioritising neutrality, safety, and clean-



liness.

Over 1.24 lakh users in Bhubaneswar and 37,000 in Cuttack have registered, while more than 10.5 lakh people have searched for the app. So far, 1.61 lakh passengers have successfully completed trips through the platform in these the twin-city.

"The two lakh trip milestone is not just a number—it reflects the growing trust in a homegrown mobility solution," said Commerce and Transport and Housing and Urban Development departments' principal secretary Usha Padhee. She also highlighted future plans to

ODISHA YATRI WINS TRUST WITH SAFETY, NEUTRALITY, AND POLICE-BACKED SECURITY

CAPITAL DRIVERS EARN ₹ 2.5 CRORE; APP RIVALS PRIVATE CAB SERVICES

OVER 1.6 LAKH PASSENGERS SERVED, WITH PLANS FOR STATEWIDE EXPANSION

expand the service statewide and eventually at the national level, including integration of domestic ambulance services to prevent exploitation of patients and their families.

"Safety remains a core pillar of Odisha Yatri, with police surveillance and prompt response mechanisms in place, setting it apart from private systems where ride cancellations and fare manipulation remain common issues, especially at night," she added.

550 NCC cadets undergo Junior Rakshak training

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 22: The State Transport Authority (STA), under the aegis of Commerce and Transport department, conducted the 'Junior Rakshak' training programme at the ongoing NCC camp in Puri Thursday, training 550 NCC cadets from higher secondary schools across Puri, Khurda, and Nayagarh districts in first aid and road safety awareness.

The camp was inaugurated by NCC Colonel Sudip Sinha and Puri RTO Rabin Pattnayak. The sessions were conducted by master trainers Amiya Bala Parida, Itishree Sundara, Subash Chandra Pradhan, and Rabindra Ku-

mar Sahu, who focused on the importance of the golden hour and techniques for providing first aid, and safe methods of transporting accident victims to nearby hospitals.

The trained cadets will now act as road safety brand ambassadors, pledging to follow traffic rules and spread awareness in their schools, families, and local communities. They were also sensitised about the Good Samaritan Scheme, which encourages citizens to assist accident victims and offers a ₹2,000 reward for their timely intervention.

Assistant motor vehicle inspector Amit Rana and ARTO Debashis Panda were also present during the training sessions and encouraged cadets to take forward the message of road safety.

The Junior Rakshak programme, launched last year, continues to gain momentum across the state as part of the department's larger campaign to reduce road fatalities. The STA is also exploring technology-based engagement to keep cadets informed and motivated in their roles as road safety ambassadors.

OCCL celebrates Foundation Day

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Construction Corporation Limited (OCCL) celebrated its 63rd Foundation Day with a special workshop 'Vision OCCL @ 2036 and Vision OCCL @ 2047' at the World Skill Center here Thursday. The event highlighted OCCL's six-decade journey in infrastructure development and laid out strategic plans for its future.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit sworn before the Notary, Cuttack, dated 22.04.2025, I, Arnapurna Sahoo, D/o - Chandramohan Sahoo, resident Jachhak Lane, Kumbharsahi, P.O. - Buxibazar, P.S. - Mangalabag, Dist. - Cuttack, declare that I have changed my name from Annpurna Sahoo to Arnapurna Sahoo. Henceforth, I shall be known as Arnapurna Sahoo for all purposes. Arnapurna Sahoo

Congress stages 24-hour dharna

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The Congress Thursday launched a 24-hour dharna near Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's official residence here over a five-point charter of demands, including 27 per cent reservation for candidates belonging to the Socially and Economically Backward Class (SEBC) in education and jobs.

Party leaders and workers led by Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das and AICC in-charge for the state, Ajay Kumar Lallu, sat on a dharna at a tent near the CM's residence at the Mahatma Gandhi Marg here.

"Our dharna will continue for 24 hours till 10am Friday. The Congress leaders and workers will spend the night at the 'satyagraha' site here," Das told reporters here.

The Congress 'Satyagraha' on the SEBC reservation came a day after Opposition BJD staged a protest rally near Raj Bhavan over a similar demand Wednesday.

DEMAND FOR 27% SEBC RESERVATION



Both the parties hit the streets after the state's BJP government last week announced its decision to provide 11.25 per cent quota for SEBC students in the higher education system.

However, there was no provision of reservation for SEBC students in medical, engineering and other technical courses as it has been done for ST and SC students.

Both the parties demanded that SEBC students must get

27 per cent reservation in education including technical education and jobs.

However, the ruling BJP said that the state government will soon make provision for reservation for SEBC students in medical and engineering courses. BJP state president Manmohan Samal said his party introduced the quota for the SEBC students within 11 months of forming the government while the BJD 'failed' to

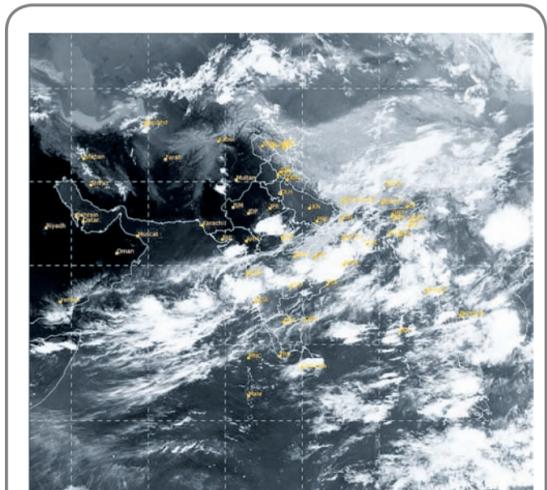
do so during its 24 years of rule from 2000 to 2024.

The OPCC president said that the Congress' five-point charter of demands include 27 per cent reservation for SEBC students in government jobs, quota provision for them in technical education including medical and engineering courses, reservation should also be implemented immediately in Panchayati Raj elections and in the private sector.

Das said his party also demands strengthening of the SC, ST Development Finance Cooperative Corporation Limited. "The government should keep ₹5,000 crore in the Corporation so that the SEBC people can take credit and do business," he said, adding that the population ratio of SEBC in Odisha was above 50 per cent.

Meanwhile, Opposition Chief Whip in Odisha Assembly Pramila Mallik of BJD said that her party would continue to demand 27 per cent reservation for SEBC. "In fact, we are of the opinion that the reservation should be in proportion to the population ratio," she said.

MARKET WATCH table with columns for CURRENCY, BOURSES, and COMMODITIES.



WEATHER table with columns for BBSR, CTC, and FORECAST.

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Poachers' electric snares put lives at risk

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, May 22: Live wires laid by poachers along the forest trails in Ranpur range under Khurda forest division as well as Nayagarh forest division and Mahanadi wildlife division to hunt wild animals have become a growing cause of concern for local residents and animal lovers.

Reports indicate that over the past eight years, three people, one elephant, and more than 1,500 wild boars have died in these areas after coming in contact with illegal live wires.

Although the live wires are primarily intended for hunting wild boars that destroy farmlands, they are also leading to unintended deaths of other wildlife, including elephants. Despite the recurring nature of this issue across several forested areas of Nayagarh district, little action has been taken to curb the practice.

The death of three individuals after accidentally stepping on these electric snares in Bahadajhola forest under



Odagaon forest range, Datta Pokhari, and Khajuria forests are some cases in point. Similarly, a tusker was electrocuted in Dhipisahi jungle area of Chamunda wildlife range.

Reports said poaching activities are on a rise in forests across Nayagarh, driven partly by an expanding boar population, bamboo thickets and declining food availability for the animals. As wildlife venture closer to villages and towns in search of food, poachers are exploiting the opportunity by setting up live wires near farmlands to target them.

These traps, typically made using live electric wires drawn

from nearby poles, involve hooking iron wires, wooden stakes, or fencing. Notable hotspots include Manibhadra forest, Satapuri hill, Ostapata, Patikata jungles near Bhanapuri village, Gadiasahi, Singhapada, Kiajhar and Kotapokhari forest areas under Khali Sahi panchayat and various jungles in Ranpur and other parts of the district.

Power supply goes off when an animal is ensnared in the live wire. The poachers dis-

connect the live wire from transmission line to pick up the carcass of the wild animals.

The poachers often wait nearby for the kill. As a result, areas where such electric traps are laid remain without power especially at night. In many villages, power is restored only after the poachers remove the illegal connections.

This issue is particularly prevalent in the forested areas of Kotapokhari, Gadiasahi, Singhapada, Kiajhar and Khalisahi panchayats under the Khandapada block. Owing to frequent laying of live wires for poaching, these villages plunge into darkness during night time.

When contacted, Divisional Forest Officer Kshyama Sarangi said action is taken whenever complaints are received about electric snares in the forest. She confirmed that steps have also been taken after the death of elephants. The Forest department is also conducting awareness campaigns to prevent the laying of live wires for poaching, she added.

Special drive: Police nab 12

6 firearms seized; suspected Bihar link under probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, May 22: In a major crackdown on organised crime, police arrested 12 suspects and seized a cache of weapons including six firearms in Berhampur amid suspicion over their link to arms factories in Bihar's Munger district.

The arrests were made following coordinated raids in four police station areas - Badabazar, Sadar, Nimakhandi, and Digapahandi - under the jurisdiction of the Berhampur police district. Along with the firearms, police also seized 12 rounds of ammunition, six magazines, seven mobile phones, six sharp-edged weapons like sword, and a toy gun.

The accused were identified as Bhalu Samal alias Lagen, 46, his nephew Lingaraj Samal alias Rinku, 22, Satyanarayan Das, 21, K Prasad Rao, 29, Mantu Gouda, 21, Ranjan Nayak, 26,



Rakesh Padhi alias Rocky, 25, Partha Das alias Bajrangi, 22, Ashok Kumar Panigrahi, 30, Tuna Nayak, 28, Sangram Panigrahi alias Shiva, 27, and Ajit Sethy alias Balia, 26.

The matter came to the fore at a presser held at the Berhampur police headquarters. IG (Southern Range) Niti Shekar praised the operation calling it a significant breakthrough. He credited the success to the leadership of Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek M and the sustained efforts of the dedicated police team.

The operation was part of a broader special drive launched under the direction of the Berhampur SP to clamp down on

professional criminals and repeat offenders who have recently returned from prison. The crackdown comes in the wake of a surge in violent crimes, including murders, robberies, and gang activity reported over the past two months in Ganjam district.

Officials suspect that the seized weapons may have been sourced from illegal arms manufacturing units of Munger in Bihar. A special police team has been formed to investigate possible interstate links and trace the full extent of the gang's network.

Berhampur SP, senior police officers, and local officials were present at the press conference.

Elderly man killed in elephant attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda/Keonjhar, May 22: A 53-year-old man was trampled to death by a tusker at Joda Chipinda village under Kut-runga panchayat and Bamebari police limits in Keonjhar district Thursday.

The incident occurred when the victim, identified as Turu Naik, had gone out to attend nature's call early Thursday morning. He came face to face with a tusker which chased and trampled him to death. Bamebari police registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem, IIC Jhasaketan Bhoi said. This is the second death in attacks by the same tusker in the past week. It had attacked and killed an elderly man when he had gone to collect firewood from Dabuna jungle under Balibandha forest section and Champua forest range May 15.

Locals have demanded the Forest department to launch efforts to free the area of elephant menace as the tusker is on a killing spree.

Woman, 2 sons drown in Rengali dam reservoir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, May 22: In a tragic incident, a woman and her two minor sons drowned while fishing in the Rengali Dam reservoir near Taleisara village under Kundheigola police limits in Deogarh district Wednesday night while her husband had a close shave.

The deceased were identified as Jyotsna Penthei, wife of Bulu Penthei, and their two sons, Ayush, 6, and Riyansh, 4, of Pudadihi village under Kundheigola panchayat.

The mishap occurred when Bulu had taken his wife and children along with him for fishing in the reservoir in a country boat as usual. While casting the fishing net, a sudden gust of wind reportedly capsize the boat, plunging all four into the water.

Sources said the bodies of the two children were recovered a few hours later by Bulu. Jyotsna, however, remained untraced until Thursday morning, when her body was found

entangled in a fishing net at a short distance from the mishap site.

Fire personnel from Riamal and locals conducted a search operation and retrieved the body around 10 am. The bodies were sent to the Deogarh district headquarters hospital for post-mortem. Police have initiated an investigation into the deaths.

Locals have urged the state government for financial assistance to the bereaved man as he is very poor. Deogarh MLA Romancha Ranjan Biswal visited the site and offered condolences to the grieving man.

Sub-Collector Parikhita Sahu, the district fisheries officer, and the Riamal tehsildar also reached the scene and conducted a preliminary inquiry. The administration has announced financial assistance of ₹15,000 from the district Red Cross fund and financial support under the Harishchandra Yojana for the last rites of the deceased persons. Further aid will be provided based on the post-mortem report, the sub-collector said.

Nayagarh celebrates Biodiversity Day with pledge to protect wildlife



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sarankul, May 22: The International Day for Biological Diversity was observed Thursday with great enthusiasm in Nayagarh district under the theme 'Harmony with Nature and Sustainable Development', bringing together environmental activists, intellectuals, conservationists and local communities to address the critical issue of wildlife protection.

The day-long programme, jointly organised by Green Club Hariharpur, Friends Help Group Nayagarh and Odisha Paryavaran Sanrakshan Abhiyan Trust at Sarankul, focused on creating a comprehen-

sive action plan to combat increasing wildlife crimes in the region.

Participants engaged in intense discussions about protecting the rich biodiversity of Nayagarh forest division, which encompasses ecologically vital areas including Daspalla, Mahipur, Odagaon, Khandpara and Panchirida ranges.

This bio-diverse region serves as habitat for numerous wildlife species including elephants, leopards, spotted deer, sambar and Southern red muntjac along with various reptiles and avian species. However, the area faces severe threats from rampant poaching activities and illegal wildlife trade, with forest-dependent communities often

involved in hunting and open sale of bushmeat in local markets.

During the deliberations, environmental experts emphasised the urgent need for multi-pronged approach to conservation. "We must focus on educating young minds about the native biodiversity, ecological importance of forest ecosystems while simultaneously creating alternative livelihood options for forest-dependent communities," said Soumya Ranjan Biswal, managing trustee of OP-SA Trust. He further stressed that regular awareness campaigns and strict enforcement of wildlife protection laws could bring substantial change in the current scenario.

The event witnessed active participation from prominent environmental activists including Secretary, Friends Help Group Sujit Kumar Pradhan, Secretary Kumar Barad from Green Club Hariharpur, Suman Pradhan from OPSA Trust, environmentalist Pami Nayak, Pupun Sahoo, and Green Club Hariharpur members Yogaguru Baikunthath Pradhan, Pramod Kumar Mohapatra, Saudagar Pradhan, Kailash Maharana.

Vigilance arrests 4 officials for embezzling govt funds over ₹20L

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rayagada, May 22: The Vigilance department Thursday arrested four government officials for allegedly embezzling public money over ₹20 lakh.

On the allegations of misappropriation of government funds without excavation of farm ponds under MGNREGA in Kashipur block of Rayagada district, the Vigilance department conducted an investigation and found that the four were involved in financial irregularities, said an official. The Vigilance arrested an assistant project director, two soil conservation overseers, and a soil conservation

extension worker, he said.

All the four are serving in the office of Project Director (PD), Watershed, Rayagada. They were found to have embezzled government money over ₹20 lakh without excavating 23 farm ponds in different villages of Kashipur block in the district, he said. The accused officials were found to have siphoned off the amount to accounts of labourers having job cards and withdrawn the same. Transactions are under verification, the official said.

In this connection, a case has been registered at Koraput Vigilance police station against all the accused persons. Further investigation is under process, he added.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for the general information that I was previously known as Mr. Girish Chandra Senapati Son of Mr. Bharat Chandra Senapati, R/O - Flat No. - 007 Sunrise Sarovar Apartment, Hansapal, Naharakanta, VTC - Baliaanta, PO - Baliaanta, Dist - Khordha, Pin - 752101 and after being diagnosed with gender dysphoria under the supervision of registered medical practitioner in New Delhi have changed my gender as female.

I henceforth be known as Ms. Gouri Senapati, Daughter of Mr. Bharat Chandra Senapati, R/O. Flat No. - 007 Sunrise Sarovar Apartment, Hansapal, Naharakanta, VTC - Baliaanta PO - Baliaanta, Dist - Khordha, Pin-752101. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in the connection.

Girish Chandra Senapati

EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/25-26/E-Tender/18

Date: 19.05.2025

(1) e-Tender-NORTHUR-64-2025, Dtd. 13.05.2025

DESCRIPTION: NEW WORKS, ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO THE EXISTING STRUCTURES, ALL ORDINARY REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WORKS OF MISCELLANEOUS NATURE AND SUPPLIES EACH COSTING RS. 5,00,000/- OR LESS IN THE SECTION TOMKA (EX)-JAROLI (EX) IN TKB LINE UNDER ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/ KENDUJHARGARH FOR THE PERIOD UP TO 30.06.2026.

Approx. Cost of the work (₹): 108.23 Lakh, EMD (₹): 2,04,100/-.

(2) e-Tender-NORTHUR-63-2025, Dtd. 14.05.2025

DESCRIPTION: PROVISION OF LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY (LHS) AT THE SPANNING LOCATION AT KM. 346/7-9 BETWEEN JAKHAPURA-JENAPUR UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION. (CUT & COVER METHOD).

Approx. Cost of the work (₹): 418.53 Lakh, EMD (₹): 3,59,300/-.

(3) e-Tender-Eastkur-65-2025, Dtd. 14.05.2025

DESCRIPTION: PROVISION OF SAFETY FENCING ALONG THE TRACK FOR RUNNING OF TRAINS WITH SPEED 130 KMPH & ABOVE IN JENAPUR-BARANG SECTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/ EAST OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the work (₹): 3636.04 Lakh, EMD (₹): 19,68,000/-.

Completion period: 12 (Twelve) Months for Sl. No. 1 & 3) & 08 (Eight) Months for Sl. No. 2).

Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1500 Hrs. of 04.06.2025 (for all Tenders).

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be 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: www.reps.gov.in

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer(s) bidder(s) can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-155Q/25-26

Advertisement for IREL (India) Limited, Formerly Indian Rare Earths Limited. It includes a 'TENDER NOTICE' for various engineering and supply contracts. The notice details the tendering process, including the website www.irel.co.in and the deadline for tender submission.

Advertisement for Bank of Maharashtra, Bhubaneswar Zonal Office. It includes a 'Recall Notice & Pre Intimation for Possession of Hypothecated Asset' and a table with details of a loan. The table columns are: Borrower Name & Address, Nature/Limit, Date of Demand Notice/Outstanding, and Details of Property Mortgaged.

Advertisement for Bank of Maharashtra, Bhubaneswar Zonal Office. It includes a 'DEMAND NOTICE' and a table with details of a loan. The table columns are: Borrowers/Prop./Co-Applicant/Co-Applicant/Guarantor, Nature/Limit, Date of NPA / Date of Demand Notice/Outstanding, and Details of Properties Mortgaged.

FOCUS FREEDOM OF SPEECH

# MUZZLING DISSENT



**Almost every government, be it at state or Centre across parties, uses its executive authority and total control over the police to muzzle dissenting voices**

case of Khan with that of Vijay Shah, a Madhya Pradesh minister, who made the most disparaging, sexist and communally loaded remarks against Colonel Qureishi. Instead of sacking the minister or at the very least publicly upbraiding him, the BJP leadership in MP rallied around their colleague, the Centre was conspicuously silent while the minister gave a token apology. It required the high court to insist that a suo motu FIR be filed against the minister and for the Supreme Court to describe his remarks as a 'national shame'. And while a court-appointed SIT has been formed to 'investigate' the minister's remarks, the MP police didn't swoop in to arrest the minister as was the case in Delhi with Khan.

Which is why there is a third and more pressing issue that underlies the Khan case. A professor with a doctoral degree from Cambridge University and impeccable academic credentials, Khan has one red mark on his CV: he is an Indian Muslim who is unafraid to speak his mind. That he comes from the erstwhile Mahmudabad royal family and his grandfather Mohammed Aamir Ahmad Khan was a key figure in the pre-Partition Muslim League makes him the perfect 'enemy' figure for a Hindutva-driven ecosystem whose prime objective it to 'demonise' the Indian Muslim as 'unpatriotic', pro-Pakistani and of questionable character.

Post-script: The Supreme Court while granting interim bail to Khan has appointed the SIT to look into his Facebook posts. Just what the SIT can 'investigate' is unclear. What is clear is that we seem to have a number of unemployed cops and a judicial system where the process is the punishment.

*The writer is a senior journalist and author. His latest book is 2024: The Election That Surprised India.*

A few weeks ago, I broadcast a contentious video blog, "My Name is Rahim Khan" to reflect upon what it meant to be an Indian Muslim in the age of Hindutva political dominance. I was instantly targeted by the Hindu Right ecosystem which accused me of falsely portraying Muslim 'victimhood' to escape confronting the real problem of rising Islamic extremism. On hindsight, maybe I got the blog name wrong: I should have titled the video blog, "My Name is Ali Khan Mahmudabad."

The recent arrest of the Ashoka University professor of political science for an opinionated Facebook post reveals all that is horribly wrong with a political establishment that has pushed the Indian Muslim to the wall. Ali Khan Mahmudabad's 'crime' was that he had chosen to express himself on Operation Sindoor by questioning what he saw as the hypocrisy of the Right wing commentariat in celebrating the presence of Colonel Sophia Qureishi in the government's media outreach on the Indo-Pak conflict. "I am very happy to see so many right wing commentators applauding Colonel Qureishi but perhaps they could also equally loudly demand that the victims of mob lynchings, arbitrary bulldozing and others who are victims of the BJP's hate-mongering be protected as Indian citizens. The optics of two women soldiers presenting their findings is important but optics must translate to reality on the ground otherwise it's just hypocrisy."

Khan was effectively drawing a distinction between Colonel Qureishi as a token symbol of 'secularism' and the ground reality of growing discrimination against Indian Muslims. It was a sharp personal critique of the Modi government but could it be perceived as an 'act endangering the sovereignty,

unity and integrity of India' or indeed, 'word, gesture or act intended to insult modesty of a woman'? Since when did criticism of government, however provocative, become 'criminalised' to the point where it attracts immediate arrest merely on a complaint by a village sarpanch who is a BJP Yuva Morcha worker, or indeed a notice sent by the Haryana State Women's Commission?

When asked in a television interview to show how exactly Khan had 'insulted the modesty of a woman', Haryana Women's Commission chief Renu Bhatia was clueless, struggling to offer a coherent explanation for any offending line. It was obvious that the Commission, like many a 'sarkari' institution, had simply jumped the gun under 'official' instructions to send off a notice to the professor. Aided by a complicit and ham-handed Delhi police, there was clearly no attempt to follow due process or even a pretense at protecting an individual's right to life and liberty.

The case raises several troubling questions. The first is the brazen abuse of power to curb free speech. This is not an isolated case. Almost every government, be it at state or Centre across parties, uses

its executive authority and total control over the police to muzzle dissenting voices. Recall how Marathi actor Ketaki Chitale faced arrest in 2022 for allegedly sharing a derogatory post about Sharad Pawar on social media. Or how the DMK government in Tamil Nadu was silent when Savukku Shankar, a YouTube and vocal critic of the ruling party was targeted when a 'group' dumped sewage and excreta in his home. Or how a Kolkata professor was charged with forwarding a Mamata Banerjee cartoon and eventually discharged only eleven years after his arrest. In a sense, the Indian political system has embraced the dictum of the infamous Ugandan dictator Idi Amin who was once quoted as saying, "there is freedom of speech but I cannot guarantee freedom after speech."

Sadly, most state governments have only taken a cue from the Centre where sedition laws in particular have been 'weaponised'. But not only is the law being 'weaponised' to curb free speech, its application is wholly selective. Which raises the second urgent concern. Who comes under the purview of the law is dependent entirely on the whims and fancies of the power elite. Just contrast the



Rajdeep Sardesai

**WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT WE SEEM TO HAVE A NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED COPS AND A JUDICIAL SYSTEM WHERE THE PROCESS IS THE PUNISHMENT**



Carolyn Chisadza

**Supporting women's agency in making peace and forging the post-conflict future demands concrete, enforceable measures to uphold women's rights and expand their participation in all forms of decision-making**

## Women As Peacemakers

Despite all the progress that has been made toward gender equality globally, many are still tempted to view armed conflict as primarily the domain of men. In fact, women often prove decisive in such settings, including in combat, non-combat, and leadership roles. Nonetheless, they are routinely sidelined in formal peace processes and post-conflict governance. This pattern reflects a moral and practical failure.

During armed conflicts, women become more vulnerable to genocide, trafficking, slavery, and sexual violence, with all the associated health risks and psychological trauma. This alone earns them the right to participate in peace processes. But women are not only passive victims of conflict: as we have seen in Ukraine, they make profound wartime contributions on the battlefield, as well as in civil society and as peace advocates.

In this sense, women often increase their agency during times of conflict, despite the risks they face. But when they are then excluded from peace negotiations and what follows – as is the case, so far, in Ukraine – these agency gains are reversed, with outdated gender norms reasserting themselves. This is especially true in conflict-affected countries with more entrenched patriarchal structures.

Legal frameworks promoting women's inclusion in conflict resolution, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction have so far failed to turn the tide, owing partly to implementation and operational challenges. For example, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, "urges all actors" to increase women's participation and "incorporate gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts." But, as of 2018, the number of women signing peace agreements had not significantly increased.

This has important implications for the content – and outcomes – of peace agreements. In a recent study, my co-authors – Matthew Clance, Romuald Meango, and Charl van Schoor – and I used natural language processing to examine the use of gendered language (including words like man, girl, boy, her, his, female, male, wife, and daughter) in peace agreements reached between 1990 and 2023. We created a "gender bias index" – ranging from -0.6 to 0.6 – with a lower score indicating lower use of gendered language and, thus, a reduced focus on gender-based outcomes.

None of the peace agreements we studied had a particularly high gender bias index, but even those that used more gendered language – which reflected a somewhat positive bias toward women – were not necessarily associated with significant improvements in women's agency. In other words, even frameworks that were gender-sensitive (acknowledging gender inequality) did not bring about meaningful change.

The problem is that the mentions of gender were not accompanied by concrete requirements, let alone monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. For example, a peace agreement might advocate for increased women's political participation, but include no targets to be met, and thus produce few, if any, results. This approach can even harm gender equality, by giving the impression that action is being taken when it is not.

Other studies show that peace agreements with disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) components rarely mention women. This compromises the post-conflict rehabilitation of women combatants, who might be excluded from the kinds of interventions aimed at their male counterparts.

Evidence shows that including women in conflict-resolution and peace-building processes leads to better outcomes for everyone. As a 2018 analysis found, there is a "robust correlation" between the inclusion of female delegates as signatories of peace agreements and the durability of the ensuing peace. Moreover, agreements signed by women tend to include significantly more provisions focused on political reform, and boast higher implementation rates for such provisions.

In El Salvador, the 1992 agreement that ended the country's 12-year civil war extended DDR benefits to women fighters, and included non-combatant female members of the opposition movement in reintegration programmes. Women went on to play a stabilising role in reintegration processes and to make major contributions to reconstruction efforts. The communities that received more consistent, systematic support through reintegration and reconstruction programmes made greater progress on gender equality and, ultimately, on development.

Similarly, in Liberia, women were involved in negotiations to end more than a decade of civil war in the early 2000s. Female representation in politics subsequently increased significantly, with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2005 becoming the first female elected head of state in Africa.

The message is clear: women must be included in all dimensions of any peace process, from designing, negotiating, and signing agreements to implementing post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction plans. They also must have access to all relevant benefit programmes, such as those related to DDR, as well as initiatives to address gender-specific needs.

More broadly, peace processes must clearly recognise and directly promote women's agency. This does not mean paying lip service to women's needs and contributions, while relying on ambiguous language to minimise accountability. Rather, supporting women's agency in making peace and forging the post-conflict future demands concrete, enforceable measures to uphold women's rights and expand their participation in all forms of decision-making.

*The writer is Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Pretoria. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE*

### WISDOM CORNER

**To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float.**

ALAN WATTS

**Every man has a property in his own person. This nobody has a right to, but himself.**

JOHN LOCKE

**The first principle is that you must not fool yourself and you are the easiest person to fool.**

RICHARD P. FEYNMAN

### SPECTRUM TRADE PACTS

## Does India stand to gain?

The global trade scenario is complex and the situation is unlikely to improve shortly. With the US imposing tariff barriers, it is unclear which countries stand to lose and what will be India's position. India reached a favourable free-trade agreement with the UK which has been hailed by business and industry groups as it is expected to facilitate trade, boost jobs and growth for both economies. Analysts are of the opinion that such a treaty augurs well at a time when Indo-US trade agreement is under negotiations to substantially reduce tariffs.

After the successful trade deal with the UK, India has also firmed up an economic partnership agreement with Chile to build upon the preferential pact that was signed several years ago. The new deal will cover a broader set of sectors, including digital services, investment promotion and cooperation, MSME and critical minerals. Meanwhile, negotiations with New Zealand have already started and are expected to be finalised shortly. Additionally, the one with EU, which has been in the pipeline for nearly two years, is also expected to move

faster, especially after Union Commerce Minister's Piyush Goyal parleys with Marcos Sefovic, the EU Commissioner for trade and commerce earlier this month.

India which has a trade surplus with the US must face a big challenge given its dependency on Washington. Though the spectrum of India's trade has been widening, it has not been successful in penetrating the global market due to lack of proper technology and efficiency in manufacturing. Some sectors such as handloom textiles and hand-knitted carpets endured on the strength of tradition, skill and labour intensity. But many others struggle against efficient and cost-competitive imports.

Though the license permit raj has been abolished, there's corruption in getting clearances from the government. India has the capability to benefit from the changed trade scenario, but substantial measures are needed to make this effective. Challenging China at this juncture is obviously not possible but India may try to come near it through technological collaborations with Western companies.

According to the World

Bank, India's exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP stood at 21.9% in 2023 as compared to 13% in 2000. The enhancement of the export sector improves foreign exchange reserves, stabilizes the national currency and aids the financial health of the country. Achieving a target of \$2 trillion in exports holds great significance for India in terms of the social and economic aspect.

India's manufacturing sector growth has remained stagnant at 15% of GDP over the years, which should have improved with new policies and incentives of the government. However, it is interesting to note that almost 30% firms plan to invest in upgradation, supporting the robust increase in capital spending for the year despite challenges such as weak demand, geopolitical tensions and high borrowing costs, as per a survey of private sector capital expenditure released by the statistics ministry. The slightly lower capex for 2025-26 at Rs 4.9 lakh crore, though still above 2023-24 levels of Rs 4.2 lakh crore reflects cautious planning after a strong 2024-25 when the intended capital expenditure was estimated

at Rs 6.8 lakh crore.

There should be sharp focus on gearing up manufacturing, facilitating proper infrastructure development and ensuring supply of high-skilled personnel so as to make products competitive and at the same time cost-effective. Another issue relates to the poor R&D spending by the private sector which is imperative to improve quality of products.

India should also focus on labour-intensive items that have a good market in the West. In this connection, Indian artisans need to be trained to improve the quality of their products.

Meanwhile, the destruction of the liberal international order doesn't presage multipolarity but rather consolidates the bipolarity that will subsist amid increasing entropy in global politics. The recent Washington-Beijing accord demonstrates that pressure tactics helped China to reduce tariffs as also its capability and expertise in the technological realm.

Analysts have rightly pointed out that India should focus on national interest in finalising the deal with the US, or for that matter any other country or even the EU.

INFA

### Shifting trade dynamics

**Sir,** India's recent imposition of trade restrictions targeting goods from Bangladesh—particularly through its northeastern land ports—has triggered significant economic concern, notably for Bangladesh's export-driven garment sector. The move came in the wake of comments by Bangladesh's interim chief advisor, Muhammad Yunus, who referred to India's northeastern states as "landlocked"—a remark New Delhi viewed as undermining regional connectivity efforts. These restrictions impact around \$770 million worth of bilateral imports, or nearly 42% of total trade volume, compelling Bangladesh exports to be rerouted through Kolkata and Nhava Sheva ports. This diversion has not only disrupted established supply chains but also driven up logistics costs, disproportionately affecting small- and medium-sized enterprises. The ready-made garment (RMG) industry, a cornerstone of Bangladesh's economy with \$618 million in annual exports to India, is particularly exposed. The added transportation costs threaten the sector's global competitiveness, potentially resulting in job losses and reduced margins. The International Labour Organization has cautioned that the disruptions could have enduring consequences on formal employment as firms struggle to absorb the shock.

**Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH**

### Turning the tide

**Sir,** When water crosses the threshold of patience, especially with ineffective outcomes despite heavy sacrifices, the tide often turns toward pragmatic and truthful solutions. The unfolding situations in Gaza and Bangladesh reflect this global pattern. In Gaza, prolonged suffering and relentless loss of civilian lives have led many to question Hamas' leadership and motives, with some turning against the group they once supported. Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, the military is reportedly showing signs of discontent under the caretaker government of Muhammad Yunus. Burdened with non-military duties and political management, the army increasingly signals a desire to return to professional military roles. These developments underscore a broader truth in current geopolitics: national stability hinges on functional institutions led by capable individuals in the right roles.

**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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate,  
Bhubaneswar-751010



INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DAY

Degraded Noida land turns botanical mosaic

Spread across 10 acres near the eastern boundary of the Shiv Nadar Institute of Excellence campus, the garden is now home to 805 species of plants, birds, both resident and seasonal/migratory, insects and also nilgais, wild boars and porcupines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: It was a degraded land with construction debris, tall grasses and a neglected wetland. A decade later, the Thematic Botanic Garden in Greater Noida is a biodiversity haven with birds, insect life and 3,000 plants, right from high altitude 'rudraksh' trees to cacti usually found in arid deserts.

Spread across 10 acres near the eastern boundary of the Shiv Nadar Institute of Excellence (IoE) campus, the garden is now home to 805 species of plants, birds, both resident and seasonal/migratory, insects and also nilgais, wild boars and porcupines.

"When this university was being built, the idea was to develop a garden where students and faculty can observe variety of plant species, can study them and can, in general, enjoy the environment," Sanjeev Galande, dean, School of Natural Sciences at the Shiv Nadar IoE, a short drive from the national capital, told PTI. The eco-restoration is the brainchild of then pro-chancellor Shikhar Malhotra and vice chancellor Rupanjali Ghosh. Assisting them was botanist Jyoti Sharma, who had earlier developed a similar thematic garden in Kerala.

Thus started a massive exper-

iment of painstakingly converting a rocky site into a living lab. After the debris was removed, a 10-degree slope was created for natural flow of water.

Planting started in February 2015. Sharma travelled to various parts of India and collected vast numbers of plant species, many of them rare and endangered.

These include the barringtonia, baobab (kalpvriksha), Buddha coconut, camphor, chinara, Indian tree of heaven, fern leaf tree, fiddle-leaf fig, kattha, lemon-scented gum, magnolia, mahogany, mahua, red sandalwood, shikakai, reetha, singapore cherry, tea tree and four species of willow.

The result is a phenomenal range that showcases plants found at higher elevation and those from flatlands, almost at sea level, to those from desert areas, all co-existing, albeit in their specially created conditions.

"Many plants were procured from horticultural gardens across the country. Some others came from specific areas of the country. Prof Sharma physically went and brought them here. He and his team studied the plants and their habitat, recreated them here so that those plants can thrive," Galande recalled.

Once the shrubs were old and sturdy enough, they were planted in designated areas.



Thematic gardens serve as living repositories for conservation, support research on plant adaptability and restoration, enable seed banking and propagation for reintroduction into the wild, promote public education and awareness on conservation, act as testing grounds for climate resilience strategies, and sustain pollinators by maintaining native plant diversity

SANJEEV GALANDE | DEAN, SCHOOL OF NATURAL SCIENCES AT THE SHIV NADAR IOE

Ten years on, the plants are now all grown up, some as high as 20 feet.

"The team put to test their scientific knowledge of botany, did plant habitat analysis, studied the ecology of the space and used all of that together here to recreate this environment for different thematic areas," Galande added.

The 12 theme gardens has plants belonging to 475 species.

The themes include those on medicinal plants, ferns and fern-allies, rare, endangered and threatened (RET) plants, aquatic plants, spices, condiments and herbs.

For instance, one stretch has 108 xerophytic plant species that have adapted to life in dry

habitat. The university stands on fertile soil with a high water table where one does not expect cacti to grow. So, cacti were grown on a raised area simulating sand dunes and semi-arid zone with rocky outcrops.

The complex also provides an opportunity to observe plants becoming rare due to various anthropogenic factors. Like the khirnee, barhal or kaith fruits that were commonly available 30-40 years ago and can no longer be seen.

About one-fourth of the area, all along the boundary, is part of Bil Akbarpur Wetlands, where a natural population of equisetum, commonly known as horse tail or 'saanp ghaas' in Hindi, is conserved.

According to Amit Tripathi, a postdoctoral research associate, equisetum is one of the oldest living genera of vascular plants and is also the sole living representative of a large and ancient group of equisetales, which inhabited the Earth during the Jurassic period.

Visitors can walk down the equisetum trail to observe the luxurious growth of the tall grass. Another species that dominates the area around the wetland is the thick plantation of willow trees (Salix Babylonica) that has helped change the ambient atmosphere there.

"During summer, it is extremely hot around here. But compared to the other areas of the campus, you will feel at least one degree Celsius difference in temperature in the thematic garden. Further, when you reach the wetland, the temperature difference is at least 2 to 3 degrees Celsius," Tripathi said.

Hemraj Sharma, a gardener, proudly pointed to the rudraksha tree generally found at high altitudes in the Himalayas.

"When it was a tiny shrub, we kept it under a net, covered with wet cloth, and watered it a lot. As a result of such care in the initial days, we are proud to tell you that it has now grown into a healthy adult tree," he said.

The sprawling acres now a veritable botanical tapestry, an essential green lung amid a concrete jungle, the garden now also serves as a place to carry out botanical experiments and works to spread awareness about different species.

Yamuna water fails to meet quality standards

According to the report by Delhi Pollution Control Committee, the higher concentrations of BOD, COD and fecal coliform indicate severe organic and bacterial contamination



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The latest monthly assessment of the Yamuna river at most places in the national capital fails to meet basic water quality standards, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) said in a report.

On May 1, water samples were collected from eight monitoring points including - Palla, Wazirabad, ITO, Nizamuddin, Okhla, and Asgarpur - which showed high concentrations of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD) and fecal coliform, it said.

According to the report, the higher concentration of BOD, COD and fecal coliform indicate severe organic and bacterial contamination.

The committee said BOD which reflects the amount of oxygen needed by bacteria to break down organic matter in water, were recorded at extremely high levels ranging from 4.0 milligrams per litre at Palla to 64.0 milligrams per litre downstream at Okhla.

The permissible BOD level for Class 'C' water (designated for outdoor bathing) is only 3 milligrams per litre.

It said that COD levels, which indicate the presence of oxidisable pollutants, peaked at 171 milligrams per litre at ITO Bridge - above the acceptable limit of 250 milligrams per litre for inland surface waters.

Fecal coliform levels, an indicator of sewage contamination, at the ITO Bridge reached 92,000 most probable number of microorganisms per 100 millilitres of a sample - nearly 37 times the maximum permissible limit of 2,500 MPN/100ml.

Elevated coliform levels were also logged at all other downstream points, pointing to widespread sewage discharge and untreated waste entering the river, the report added.

NGT raps Delhi Jal Board for supplying sewage mixed drinking water

The National Green Tribunal has pulled up Delhi Jal Board for supplying non-potable water to Janakpuri residents in the capital. Households in the area were allegedly supplied sewage-mixed drinking water. In an order May 14, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said, "Supply of drinking water which is unfit to the residents of the city is very serious matter but ignoring such a seriousness the DJB has not taken expeditious action to remediate it and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has not done the needful to get the water sample report expeditiously in terms of the previous order of the tribunal." The bench also comprising judicial members Justices Sudhir Agarwal and Arun Kumar Tyagi, and expert member Afroz Ahmad, directed the CPCB to collect water samples from the area and file a fresh report. The tribunal specified that the samples had to be collected from 10 new and old locations each without informing any authority, including DJB, and that the samples had to be analysed expeditiously, particularly for faecal coliform and E. coli bacteria. A resident welfare association from the area moved the green body and claimed corroded water supply pipelines led to the mixing of untreated sewage with the drinking water. During the proceedings, the applicant's counsel said the residents were suffering after consuming the contaminated water, and one of the residents was hospitalised after being diagnosed with Hepatitis A and E. coli.

Ammonical nitrogen, a marker of domestic and industrial waste-water, was also found to be in excess, with levels rising up to 5.75 milligrams per litre at Nizamuddin Bridge. The safe threshold for this parameter is typically below 1 milligrams per litre.

RECORD ALLOCATION

₹2,475cr scholarships disbursed to students of backward classes in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 22: The Uttar Pradesh government Thursday said it has disbursed scholarships worth ₹2,475 crore in 2024-25, benefitting nearly 30 lakh students from backward categories.

In a statement, the government said the Scholarship and Fee Reimbursement Scheme of the Backward Classes Welfare Department has significantly expanded access to education.

"For 2024-25, a record ₹2,475 crore was allocated, benefitting nearly 30 lakh students and marking the highest scholarship disbursement to date. This reflects the government's strong commitment to linking backward communities with higher education," it added.

Under the scheme, pre-matric students receive ₹2,250 annually, while post-matric students get scholarships and reimbursements ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹50,000. The amount is directly credited to their bank accounts, the government said.

It said recognising the need for digital competence alongside formal education, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched a large-scale Computer Training Scheme targeting educated and unemployed OBC (other backward classes) youth.

In 2023-24, a budget of ₹22.52 crore was utilised to train 23,697 students in courses such as CCC (course on computer concepts) and O-level (ordinary level). The previous financial year witnessed 29,769 trainees benefitting from an outlay of ₹32.92 crore.

"This training initiative equips youth with essential digital skills, significantly enhancing their employability in the private and public sectors. Under this scheme, the government plans to introduce new-age courses in areas like artificial intelligence to boost technological empowerment further," it said.

The state government said it has taken significant steps under the Hostel Construction and Maintenance Scheme to support students from remote areas. A provision of ₹2 crore was made for the upkeep of 105 hostels offering free accommodation to students, it said.



Firemen douse a fire as smoke billows from a factory, at Ujhani area, in Budaun district, Uttar Pradesh, Thursday

'SASHAKT KRISHI' PROJECT

Mandoli Jail transforms into agricultural hub

The inmates have already harvested over 310 kilograms of organic fruits and vegetables for internal consumption

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: In a bid to cut jail expenses, promote sustainability and impart vocational skills, around 1.5 acres of unused land inside Mandoli Jail has been transformed into a thriving agricultural zone under the 'Sashakt Krishi' project.

The inmates have already harvested over 310 kilograms of organic fruits and vegetables for internal consumption.

The project, launched in jail number 13 of Mandoli complex, is currently in its first phase and employs 25 inmates, who have been selected based on physical fitness, willingness and good conduct.

The initiative aims to engage prisoners in productive, skill-based activity while also reducing the facility's dependence on external food procurement.

"Seasonal and regionally appropriate crops were chosen in consultation with horticulture experts and the Agricultural Department," said a senior jail official, adding that vegetables like bottle gourd, cucumber, okra (lady finger), bitter melon and fruits such as custard apple, muskmelon and banana are being grown.

Herbs like mint, coriander and green chili - commonly



used in jail kitchens - have also been cultivated. The official said that farming efforts have already made a visible impact.

"About 150 kg of kitchen waste has been converted into compost and used in cultivation. This initiative not only cuts costs but also supports sustainable waste management," he added.

In the upcoming second phase, authorities plan to ex-

expand cultivation by 30 to 40 per cent and introduce vermicomposting (a natural process whereby earthworms convert waste material with rigid structures into compost) using red worms. There are also plans to plant more fruit-bearing trees, including guava, lemon and mango.

A vocational training component in horticulture in partnership with the Skill India

Mission will also be integrated to enhance post-release employability of inmates.

The third phase will focus on converting jail number 13 into a model unit for 'green jail' practices. The plans include developing a 'Krishi Van' or green belt within unused jail yards and setting up an inmate-run nursery for plant saplings, which could potentially be sold to the public.

"We aim to replicate this model in other units of Mandoli Jail, with trained inmates from jail number 13 acting as facilitators," the official added.

The project also had a positive psychological effect on inmates, with officials noting improved mood, better sleep and reduced stress among participants.

"Word is spreading and more inmates are expressing interest in joining the initiative," he said.

Besides supplementing jail meals and enhancing nutritional value, the project has added aesthetic value to the jail environment, the official said.

The initiative was conceptualised and implemented by Jail Number 13 Superintendent Ashish Kumar under Director General (Prison) Satish Golcha's guidance.

Drive to remove illegal encroachments in Delhi

New Delhi: The Delhi Traffic Police conducted a three-day special drive from May 19 to 21 across the New Delhi Range to remove illegal encroachments and ease congestion, officials said Thursday. The massive crackdown targeted key traffic corridors including Arjun Path, Old Delhi-Gurugram Road, Mahipalpur Market, Sarojini Nagar Market and South Campus Ring Road, they said. The crackdown also targeted Nelson Mandela Road, RK Puram, Khan Market, Barakhamba Road, Janpath Marg and several other high-footfall areas with heavy vehicular movement during peak hours, officials added. A total of 11,361 challans were issued and 302 vehicles were towed for illegal parking or obstruction. Legal action under appropriate sections of law was initiated against the violators, the traffic police said in a statement. According to officials, the drive was aimed at reclaiming public spaces and ensuring smoother flow of traffic by addressing obstructions such as illegally parked autorickshaws, private taxis, e-rickshaws, and street vendors (rehri-partis), which were narrowing roadways and obstructing pedestrian movement.



Advertisement for the Office of the Superintending Engineer, (R&B) Division, Kantabanji. It includes details about a bid for electrical work, contact information, and a list of terms and conditions.



India does not tease anyone but if anyone teases us then he will not be spared at any cost ANURAG THAKUR | BJP MP

SALMAN FACES SECURITY BREACHES

Police have arrested a man and a woman for allegedly separately trespassing on actor Salman Khan's building in Mumbai's Bandra area over the past two days, an official said Thursday



of the day quote

In summers, the water consumption goes up... they (AAP) have a government in Punjab. They have reduced the water supply... (AAP) never thought about people



MAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

If we assume at least 75 aspirants per post, it will amount to around 1.45 crore affected candidates. If we include just two family members per candidate, the number of affected voters translates to more than 4.34 crore



AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

Our objective is to ensure no one is deprived of proper treatment. A healthy Delhi is the foundation of a Viksit Delhi



REKHA GUPTA | DELHI CM

A month after Pahalgam attack, killers still at large

Thousands of suspects across Kashmir were called in for questioning while hundreds were detained as the security grid launched a massive crackdown to hunt down the perpetrators of the massacre



Nearly 100 persons were booked under the Public Safety Act and sent to various jails

There are reports that security forces also picked up youngsters who had already served terms for past associations with militancy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pahalgam, May 22: A month after the deadly terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam, locals in the south Kashmir resort town stare at mounting livelihood losses, even as the perpetrators have managed to evade the massive crackdown launched by security forces to track them down.

have said there were between four and six terrorists.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the terrorists shot the victims after verifying their religion by asking them to recite the "kalma", the verse recited to profess Islamic faith.

The officials said the security forces were conducting relentless operations to track down the terrorists.

"They have managed to evade the security forces thus far but it won't be too long before we get them," a senior police officer said.

Thousands of suspects across Kashmir were called in for questioning while hundreds were detained as the security grid launched a massive crackdown to hunt down the perpetrators of the massacre.

Nearly 100 persons were booked under the Public Safety Act and sent to various jails.

There are reports that security forces also picked up youngsters who had already served terms for past associations with

militancy. Meanwhile, locals in Pahalgam and adjoining areas are counting their losses as tourists have stopped visiting.

"The place looks desolate. We used to have thousands of tourists on any given day in Pahalgam, providing livelihood opportunities for everyone -- shopkeepers, roadside vendors, ponywallahs, cab drivers and hoteliers," said tour operator Nasir Ahmad.

He said Pahalgam had not worn such a deserted look even at the peak of the early 1990s' insurgency.

"We used to host local visitors (Kashmiris) and that sustained the economy at the worst of times. However, this time, even local visitors are not coming," he said.

Mohammad Irshad, a shopkeeper, said the situation for those earning a livelihood from tourism had started to turn desperate. The locals are now hoping the Amarnath Yatra, scheduled to begin July 3, would bring about a change in their fortunes.

"We are hopeful that the Amarnath pilgrims will help change the perception about Pahalgam. It was a sad and unfortunate incident that took place but it is not what Kashmir is all about. We are hospitable people and highly value our guests," said Sabzar Ahmad, a ponywallah.

As security is always foolproof during the yatra period, the regular Hindu devotees may finally break the trend and arrive for the pilgrimage, he said.

"The arrangements for the yatra are always of the highest order and the locals have played their role in facilitating the pilgrims. We will do it again this year," he added.

Cong slams Modi over silence on Trump claims



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The Congress Thursday alleged that the diplomatic delegations being sent abroad were part of the government's "WMD -- weapons of mass distraction" exercise and demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi call a special session of Parliament and clarify US President Donald Trump's India-Pakistan ceasefire claims.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also said that instead of throwing out grand sounding but hollow filmy dialogues in public rallies, as he did in Bikaner Thursday, the Prime Minister should answer the serious questions being asked of him.

"Why are the brutal killers of Pahalgam still free -- according to some reports, they had been responsible for three earlier terror attacks in Poonch, Gagangir and Gulmarg over the past 18 months. Why have you not chaired any all-party meeting and taken the opposition parties into confidence?" Ramesh said in a post on X.

He also questioned why the prime minister had not called a special session of Parliament to reiterate the unanimously-passed resolution of February 22, 1994, and update it, given the deep China-Pakistan nexus evident during Operation Sindoor. "Why have you stubbornly remained silent

on the repeated claims being made by President Trump and US Secretary of State Rubio on the US role over the past two weeks especially?" Ramesh asked.

Speaking with PTI, the Congress general secretary cited news reports that the terrorists responsible for the Pahalgam massacre were also involved in three earlier terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and said there should be a clarification from the government if this was true as it would make their being at large even more serious. "The continued refusal of the Prime Minister to call a session of Parliament and meanwhile send a delegation of 50 MPs to different countries... is all domestic optics and meaningless," Ramesh said.

"These delegations are 'meaningless optical exercises'," he added.

"India and Pakistan have WMDs (weapons of mass destruction). India has one more class of WMD that Pakistan does not have -- weapon of mass distraction. The sending of these delegations is part of the WMD exercise," Ramesh said in a swipe at Modi.

With Trump repeating his claim that he settled the military conflict between India and Pakistan through the promise of trade, the Congress also said Modi had not rejected these statements even once and asked the reason behind this "thundering silence".

Ch'garh: CoBRA commando, Naxalite killed in encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, May 22: A CoBRA commando of the CRPF and a Naxalite were killed during an anti-Maoist operation in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Thursday, officials said.

The incident took place in the morning hours around the Tumrel area under the Usoor police station limits. The operation was led by the 210th Battalion of CRPF's CoBRA unit and troops from Chhattisgarh Police's DRG and STF, the officials said.

The troops launched the operation Wednesday based on inputs about the movement of the PLGA battalion no. 1 of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). Commando Solanki hailed from Gujarat. According to the officials, the forces are in the area and the operation is underway. Three other CoBRA troops were injured in the gun battle, the officials said. They said an IAF helicopter was pressed into service to evacuate the injured, who have been admitted to a hospital in Raipur. They are out of danger.

A male Naxalite was neutralised in the exchange of fire and a weapon was recovered. His identity is yet to be ascertained, they said. The officials earlier said the operation was underway in Sukma district.

UAE, Japan express solidarity with India in war against terror

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Abu Dhabi/Tokyo, May 22: The United Arab Emirates and Japan Thursday expressed solidarity with India in the war against terrorism as multi-party delegations started reaching out to world capitals to sensitise global leadership about terror emanating from Pakistan, a month after the Pahalgam attack that left at least 26 persons dead.

A delegation led by Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde held talks with the UAE Minister of Tolerance Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Defence Committee Ali Al Nuaimi and other prominent leaders in Abu Dhabi, while the group of parliamentarians, led by JD(U) member Sanjay Jha interacted with Japan's Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya and other leaders in Tokyo.

"Terrorism is a threat not just to a single nation or region, but it is a global threat. We believe that we, as an international community, should come together, especially the Members of Parliament, to work on putting plans and strategies and engage in creating a better future for all humanity," Al Nuaimi told reporters in Abu Dhabi. A statement issued by the Indian Embassy in Japan quoted Iwaya telling the multi-party delegation led by Jha that terrorism cannot be justified in any form and expressed solidarity with India and with the world in the fight against terrorism.

SHORT TAKES

Three killed while cleaning septic tank

Jaipur: Three workers died after they inhaled a toxic gas while cleaning a septic tank at a woolen mill in Karani Industrial Area in Bikaner Thursday, police said. The workers were called to clean the tank filled with wastewater containing chemicals which are used in thread processing at the mill, they said.

Rahul likely to visit Poonch Saturday

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is likely to visit Poonch in the Jammu region Saturday to meet the families of those killed and affected by the recent Pakistani shelling, party sources said. This will be the second visit of Gandhi, the leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, to Jammu and Kashmir after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 25 tourists and one local were killed.

Three killed as dust storm batters Delhi

New Delhi: A nine-year-old girl was among the three killed in the massive dust storm and heavy rains that lashed the national capital, officials said Thursday. The other two killed included a 22-year-old man and a differently-abled person. Also, at least 11 were injured in the intense storm and rain Wednesday evening.

Punjab & Haryana HC receives bomb threat

Chandigarh: The Punjab and Haryana High Court Thursday received a bomb threat e-mail, prompting the Chandigarh Police to launch a search of the court premises, officials said. Most parts the court complex have been evacuated and public entry has been restricted for the time-being, they said.

3 die consuming liquor in Ludhiana

Ludhiana: Close on the heels of the Amritsar hooch tragedy that claimed 27 lives, three persons died after allegedly consuming liquor at Basti Jodhewal in Ludhiana district, police said Thursday. However, the exact cause of the deaths will be ascertained only after post-mortem examinations, ADCP Davinder Chaudhary said. Earlier this month, 27 people lost their lives in Amritsar after consuming spurious liquor, in which most of the victims were daily wagers.

PM inaugurates 103 Amrit Bharat stations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bikaner, May 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday emphasised on the nation's commitment to modernisation, saying a huge effort is underway to build modern infrastructure for a developed India as he virtually inaugurated 103 Amrit Bharat railway stations in different parts of the country.

"India is modernising its train network and infrastructure. This reflects the new speed and progress of the country," he said at a programme in this city where he inaugurated, laid the foundation stone and dedicated development projects worth ₹26,000 crore to the nation. The 103 redeveloped Amrit Bharat stations are spread across 86 districts in 18 states and Union territories at a cost of over ₹1,100 crore. Modi said unprecedented work has been

done in the past 11 years to modernise the railway stations and airports in the country, adding the nation is spending multiple times more money than before on development projects. On Vande Bharat services, he said the train is running on nearly 70 routes in the country. "This has brought trains to far-flung areas. Hundreds of road overbridges and underbridges have been constructed in the last 11 years. New tracks have been laid. Work is underway on the country's first bullet train project," Modi added.

"These modernised railway stations have been named as Amrit Bharat stations. Out of these, more than 100 Amrit Bharat stations have been completed. People are seeing on social media what was the situation earlier and how the picture has changed now," he said.



A vendor arranges watermelons at a market on a hot summer day in Nagpur, Maharashtra

PTI PHOTO

ISRO set for space station, other missions: Narayanan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 22: ISRO is gearing up to launch its own space station into orbit, marking a bold leap in India's space ambitions, chairman V Narayanan said Thursday.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief also said the Department of Space, of which he is the Secretary, is working alongside various organisations to ensure the safety and security of the country's citizens.

"Take our country, for example -- we have 11,500 km of coastline, and then there's the northern border. We have a vast border to monitor, and the government is working diligently to ensure our safety. There are responsible individ-



uals and systems in place," he told reporters on the sidelines of a programme of Rammohan Mission here.

Narayanan said, "Currently, we have 57 satellites in orbit, serving the public by providing real-time updates and data on a wide range of issues, from

weather forecasts to tele-education in the most remote areas."

About the space station, he said it will weigh over 50 tonnes. On the recent failure of the PSLV-C61/EOS-09 mission, Narayanan described the setback an exception in ISRO's track record.

He asserted that the setback cannot in any way derail ISRO's future programmes like Gaganyaan - which will be an important milestone for India's space exploration.

"Right now, we (ISRO) are also working on Chandrayaan-4 and Chandrayaan-5, in collaboration with Japan, will have a 6,400 kg lander carrying a 350-kg rover. It will have a life span of 100 days," he said.

The Chandrayaan-3 lander weighed 1,600 kg having a 25-

kg rover. Chandrayaan-4, to bring back sample from the lunar surface, will be launched in the next two-and-a-half years.

"Over the past several decades, India has moved on and is now placed among the top nations in space research and exploration," he added.

The eminent space scientist further said that ISRO is preparing for the country's first human spaceflight,

The ISRO chief said the Department of Space is working alongside various organisations to ensure the safety and security of the country's citizens

called 'Gaganyaan'. Narayanan said Gaganyaan's first mission will be an uncrewed test flight, which is expected to be launched in the coming days.

This will be followed by two missions with crew which are expected to be launched by ISRO in the near future, he added. Earlier in the day, the ISRO chief addressed students of Ram Mohan Mission and Ram Mohan Mission High School on the 253rd birth anniversary of social reformer Rammohan Roy. He paid glowing tributes to Roy and other social reformers who championed the causes of emancipation and women's uplift. Narayanan also highlighted the contributions of women space scientists in India's space programmes.



Modernity has sidelined these traditions, leading to environmental imbalance and rising health issues  
YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

## TAMIL NADU RECORDS 26 ENDANGERED BIRD SPECIES

As many as 26 out of 37 endangered bird species available in Tamil Nadu besides 17 nocturnal bird species, were recorded during the state-wide synchronised bird census 2025. This year, the annual bird census laid special emphasis on documenting the endangered birds and nocturnal birds



## INDIGO TURBULENCE

### Pakistan rejected pilot's request to use its airspace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/ Mumbai, May 22: An IndiGo pilot operating the Delhi-Srinagar flight, which encountered a sudden hailstorm Wednesday, initially sought Lahore Air Traffic Control's permission to briefly use the Pakistan airspace to avoid the turbulence, but the request was rejected, sources said Thursday.

The incident of flight 6E 2142 encountering severe turbulence is being probed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the sources said.

The flight, carrying more than 220 people, including Trinamool Congress MPs encountered a sudden hailstorm, and the pilot reported the "emergency" to air traffic control at Srinagar airport. The flight had landed safely Wednesday.

When the aircraft was overflying Amritsar, the pilot noticed turbulence and sought Lahore Air Traffic Control's (ATC) permission to take a deviation through the Pakistan airspace Wednesday.

The request was made in order to avoid the turbulence, but it was rejected by the Lahore ATC, the sources told PTI.

As a result, the aircraft operated on the original flight path, where it encountered severe turbulence, they added.

In the wake of tensions between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack that killed at least 26 people, Pakistan airspace is closed for Indian carriers.

## Acharya Prasanna Sagar honoured at Patanjali varsity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Haridwar, May 22: Patanjali University Thursday warmly welcomed Antarmana Acharya Prasanna Sagar Ji Maharaj, a revered saint of the Digambar Jain tradition, with a grand ceremony marked by spiritual discourse and interfaith dialogue.

During the event, Jain Muni Prasanna Sagar Ji praised Yoga Guru Swami Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna for their selfless efforts in promoting Yoga, Ayurveda, and global harmony.

Swami Ramdev, Chancellor of Patanjali University, hailed the Acharya's visit as a profound moment for Indian philosophy.



cal thought, stating that Jainism represents the purest essence of Sanatan Dharma, guiding humanity through penance, non-violence, and soul awareness.

Acharya Balkrishna, Vice-Chancellor and renowned Ayurvedacharya, paid poetic tribute to the Acharya through Sanskrit verses, describing his spiritual strength as beyond words. As part of the honours, the Jain community presented a citation to Swami Ramdev, while the university offered a special tribute to Acharya Prasanna Sagar Ji for his renunciation and spiritual contributions. The Acharya also visited the Patanjali Research Institute and participated in a tree plantation at the Herbal Garden.

The event was graced by other Jain monks including Muni Piyush Sagar Ji, Apramati Sagar Ji, Parimal Sagar Ji, Acharya Naigam Sagar Ji, and nuns Mata Gyanprabha, Charitraprabha Ji, and Punyaprabha Ji. Key attendees from Patanjali University included Chief Disciplinary Officer Prof. Sadhvi Devpriya, Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof. Mayank Kumar Agrawal, all faculty heads, teachers, researchers, and students.

# CBI chargesheets Malik, 7 others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The CBI has filed a chargesheet against former Jammu and Kashmir governor Satyapal Malik and seven others in connection with alleged corruption in the award of ₹2,200-crore civil works for Kiru hydropower project, officials said Thursday.

After three years of probe, the central agency submitted its findings in the chargesheet before a special court in Jammu.

In its chargesheet, the CBI has named Malik and his two aides Virender Rana and Kanwar Singh Rana, the officials said.

The other persons named in the chargesheet included the then Chenab Valley Power Projects Pvt Ltd (CVPPPL) managing director M S Babu, its directors Arun Kumar Mishra and M K Mittal, managing director of construction firm Patel Engineering Ltd Rupen Patel and private person Kanwaljeet Singh Dugal, they said.

The agency has invoked Section 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of Ranbir Penal Code and provisions of J&K Preven-

## KIRU HYDROPOWER CORRUPTION CASE



After three years of probe, the central agency submitted its findings in the chargesheet before a special court in Jammu

tion of Corruption Act as the alleged crime took place before abrogation of Article 370 August 5, 2019 when these archaic legal provisions in erstwhile state were replaced by Indian Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act.

Soon after the news of the chargesheet flashed, a photo of 79-year-old Malik was posted on his 'X' handle showing him lying in a hospital bed surrounded by an array of medical apparatus, including an intravenous infusion device and a ventilatory support system.

"I am getting calls from many of my well-wishers which I

am unable to take. My condition is very bad right now. I am admitted in the hospital and am not in a condition to talk to anyone," the accompanying message read on 'X'.

When contacted, his private secretary Kanwar Singh Rana told PTI that the former governor is in critical condition in Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital here. He said the move of the CBI to chargesheet the "complainant (Malik)" is "sheer harassment".

"Last year also when he (Malik) was admitted in Max hospital, the CBI had conducted searches and now when he is

admitted in hospital they have filed chargesheet against him. We (Rana and Malik) had told the CBI that we had nothing to do with any corruption," Rana said in a statement.

The CBI had conducted searches at the premises of Malik and others in connection with the case in February last year.

The case pertains to the alleged malpractices in the award of the contract worth about ₹2,200 crore of civil works of the Kiru Hydro Electric Power (HEP) Project to a private company in 2019, the CBI had said after the registration of the FIR in 2022.

Malik, who was the governor of Jammu and Kashmir from August 23, 2018 to Octo-

## SC reserves interim orders in waqf case



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: Reiterating its observation on the presumption of constitutionality in favour of the law, the Supreme Court Thursday reserved interim orders on three key issues after hearing both sides in the waqf case.

One of the issues relate to the power to denotify properties declared as "waqf by courts, waqf-by-user or waqf by deed" prescribed in Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Before reserving the interim order, a bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih heard senior advocates including Kapil Sibal, Rajeev Dhavan, Abhishek Singhvi and Huzefa Ahmadi for those challenging the amended waqf law and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, on three consecutive days.

On the last day, the CJI said, "I have already said that there is a presumption of constitutionality." On May 20, the CJI noted the same and said, "For interim relief, you have

to make out a very strong and glaring case. Otherwise, presumption of constitutionality will be there."

The bench previously identified the three issues, on which a stay was sought by the petitioners, for passing interim orders. Apart from the issue of denotification, petitioners have raised questions over 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.

Moreover, though waqf was an Islamic concept, it was not an essential part of Islam, it added. Sibal, leading the petitioners, described the law as a "complete departure from historical legal and constitutional principles" and a means to "capture waqf through a non-judicial process".

Highlighting the tribal land exclusion clause under the law, he said Scheduled Tribes in scheduled areas were a constitutionally protected class, and the amendment respected that status. The bench asked whether a religious identity could override cultural protections especially if waqf properties were created on tribal land.



Buddhist monks perform a traditional mask dance at Tupchiling Monastery, in Lahaul. The ritualistic dance, rooted in Buddhist, Hindu, and tribal traditions, features performers wearing masks of deities, mythological characters, and animals to express stories and emotions

## UP storm triggers factory fire, wall collapse; 15 dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow (UP), May 22: At least 15 people were killed and several injured as a powerful storm with heavy rains swept across parts of Uttar Pradesh, triggering fires, wall collapses, and accidents. The storm caused extensive damage to infrastructure, property, and crops across multiple districts.

In Meerut, three people, including a doctor, died in separate incidents. One was killed by a falling unipole, another crushed under a tree, and the third trapped under a collapsed wall. The storm also disrupted power supply and damaged hoardings and electric poles.

A massive fire broke out at an oil factory in Budaun after strong winds caused a partial collapse, leading to sparks igniting mentha oil and chemicals. Firefighters battled the blaze overnight, which intensified due to hydrogen cylinder explosions early Friday.

In Bijoor, a constable died after hitting a fallen tree while riding his motorcycle. In Jhansi, a loader driver was killed when a large hoarding collapsed on his parked vehicle.

Etah saw four deaths, with over 15 injured in incidents including wall collapses and falling debris. In Udayapura and nearby villages, fatalities included men crushed under

collapsing structures. A family of six was injured in Jalesar when a tin shed and wall collapsed on them.

Three people died in Bulandshahr, including a man whose house wall collapsed, a person who fell from his roof while securing a solar plate, and a teenager killed by a falling tree.

The storm also affected crops—20% of mangoes in Rataul fell prematurely—and caused major power outages. Over 20 electric poles were damaged in Barot town alone.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to expedite relief work, assess damages, and ensure aid reaches affected families.

## Consider Maha's Zudpi Jungle as forest lands: SC

The apex court 1996 verdict defined the term "forest".

A bench of Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih noted that "zudpi" was a Marathi word, literally translating to bushes or shrubs and "zudpi" lands meant an inferior type of unoccupied lands with bushy growth



Climate Change, it added.

"Zudpi jungle lands shall be considered as forest lands in line with the order of this court dated December 12, 1996 in the present proceedings," the verdict penned by the CJI said.

The top court underlined maintaining a balance between environmental protection and the need for sustainable development. Various developmental activities, it said, were already undertaken on "Zudpi Jungle"

lands like construction of irrigation dams, roads, schools, public health centres and other utilities facilities.

The bench annexed a list of institutions, buildings, residential areas, public utilities which would be affected in the city of Nagpur alone.

It said even the buildings in which the high court, high court judges' residences, state governments' secretariat, central government's buildings, defence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The Supreme Court Thursday declared Zudpi Jungle lands in Maharashtra's eastern Vidarbha region as forests in line with its 1996 verdict but protected the structures existing on it for decades.

The apex court 1996 verdict defined the term "forest". A bench of Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih noted that "zudpi" was a Marathi word, literally translating to bushes or shrubs and "zudpi" lands meant an inferior type of unoccupied lands with bushy growth.

## of the day quote

Whether it's sports, health, education, tourism, or infrastructure, Bundi's landscape is set to change in the coming times  
OM BIRLA | LS SPEAKER

The farmer must involve thoroughly with marketing of agriculture produce as well as value addition. A major change in the farmer's income will come only when the farmer also engages in the business of agriculture  
JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

The liquor scam is a sham in which charges are fabricated only to nullify and weaken the liquor case in which Chandrababu Naidu is on bail and the irregularities being carried out by him  
YS JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | YSRCP CHIEF

## POST OF THE DAY

Attended the Defence Investiture Ceremony-2025 (Phase-1), where Gallantry Awards were presented.

India will always be grateful to our armed forces for their valour and commitment to safeguarding our nation.

@narendramodi

## SHORT TAKES

### Delhi govt moves apex court

New Delhi: The seven bitterly contested cases filed by the erstwhile AAP-led Delhi government against the Centre and the Lieutenant Governor (LG) over issues including the control over services in the national capital have been sought to be withdrawn from the Supreme Court following the change in regime. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotliwar Singh directed to list the application filed by the BJP-led Delhi government for Friday. Appearing for the Delhi government, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati said the application seeks the withdrawal of seven cases pending in the top court, which challenged the authority of the LG in several committees, including solid waste management, Yamuna cleaning and against the validity of Acts and ordinances.

### BJP MLA sent to jail

Darbhanga (Bihar): A local court in Bihar's Darbhanga district Thursday sent Alinagar BJP MLA Mishri Lal Yadav and his associate to judicial custody in connection with a 2019 assault case. "Suman Kumar Diwakar, additional district and sessions judge of Special MP/MLA court of Darbhanga, ordered security personnel to take the MLA into custody when he and his associate deposed before the court," Assistant Public Prosecutor Renu Jha told reporters.

### Tennis coach gets 7-year jail term

New Delhi: A tennis coach has been sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment for allegedly sexually assaulting his minor student, the police said Thursday claiming the case was solved in 50 days. The case was registered at the Nihal Vihar police station March 17 following a complaint by the 13-year-old girl, the Delhi Police said in a statement.





**Samsung's initiative to manufacture the Galaxy S25 Edge in India is a significant development that reflects the country's rising prominence in the global tech landscape, both as a manufacturing base and as a centre for innovation**  
NIKHIL CHAWLA | TECH, AUTO EXPERT

## RIDE HAILING APPS UNDER RADAR

Consumer protection watchdog CCPA is investigating ride-hailing platforms like Ola Cabs and Rapido to ascertain if they are indulging in the unfair trade practice of 'advance tipping'. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) issued a notice to Uber for allegedly "forcing or nudging" users to pay advance tips for faster service, said Wednesday



## of the day quote

**As India undergoes a transformative energy transition, Juniper Green Energy is positioned to capitalise on the growing renewable energy sector in India. I look forward to working closely with our teams and partners to create long-term, sustainable value for all our stakeholders**  
ANKUSH MALIK | CEO, JUNIPER GREEN ENERGY



**All the outstanding issues will be resolved and we will move forward...NSE and Sebi are talking, they are resolving the issues and I'm very hopeful, it will be cleared and will move forward**  
TUHIN KANTA PANDEY | CHIEF, SEBI



**Students today learn differently, they crave content that is relatable, short, and emotionally compelling. With GSL's deep understanding of learners and our storytelling capabilities powered by AI, we're designing content that doesn't just inform but also gives them a perspective**  
VATSAL SHETH | CEO, PRISMIX STUDIOS



## Q4 RESULTS

### Emcure Pharma PAT up

**New Delhi:** Emcure Pharmaceuticals Thursday reported a 63 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) to ₹197 crore during the March quarter. The Pune-headquartered firm reported a profit after tax (PAT) of ₹121 crore on a consolidated basis a year ago.

### Ester Industries posts profit

**New Delhi:** Ester Industries, reported a profit of ₹1.9 crore in the March quarter. It had posted a loss of ₹23.7 crore in the year-ago period. The firm's revenue from operations stood at ₹319.25 crore in the January-March period, 15.3 per cent higher from ₹276.73 crore in the year-ago period.

### Alpex Solar profit grows

**New Delhi:** Alpex Solar has reported a multi-fold rise in consolidated net profit to ₹35.31 crore for the March quarter, driven by higher revenues. It had recorded a net profit of ₹6.28 crore in the January-March period of 2023-24, the company said in a statement.

### ITC profit rises

**New Delhi:** ITC Ltd Thursday posted a nearly four-fold jump in consolidated net profit to ₹19,807.8 crore for the quarter ended March 31. It had reported a profit of ₹5,013.18 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing.

### ONGC profit falls

**New Delhi:** Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) reported a 35 per cent drop in its March quarter net profit as it realised lower oil prices on almost static output. Net profit stood at ₹6,448 crore in January-March - the fourth quarter of FY25 (April 2024 to March 2025), according to a company statement.

### HFCL reports loss

**New Delhi:** Home grown telecom gear maker HFCL Thursday posted a loss of ₹83 crore in the March quarter. The company had posted a consolidated profit after tax (PAT) of ₹109 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said.

## INDIA-UK: DEAL TO REMEMBER

# Equal treatment for Indian firms in public procurement

*This marks a historical trade deal as, UK has agreed to treat Indian firms equally in its public procurement. It indeed is a big achievement because trade and equality came together after ages*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** UK for the first time has agreed to accord non-discriminatory treatment to Indian companies in its public procurement system under the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries, an official said.

On May 6, the two announced conclusion of negotiations for the FTA. It will be implemented next year.

"For the first time, UK agreed to take binding commitment to provide non-discriminatory treatment to our suppliers under UK's Social Value regime in their public procurement system," the official said.

Under the UK's Social Value law, the British government departments require public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts.

According to the UK government, the trade pact will give UK businesses "unique and un-

precedented" access to India's public procurement market, comprising about 40,000 tenders with a value of at least 38 billion pounds a year.

On the other hand, India has agreed to allow British companies to participate in public procurements only in the non-sensitive sectors.

The UK firms, however, will not be allowed to participate in procurements by state government entities and local bodies.

"UK-based suppliers would be allowed to bid for domestic tenders above the agreed thresholds (above ₹200 crore) as deemed Class II local suppliers under public procurement.

Carve out is also provided for India's 'Make in India policy' as well as medium and small enterprises.

Earlier, India opened the government procurement segment in the comprehensive trade pact with the UAE. Under that pact, UAE firms are

allowed to participate in procurement tenders worth over ₹200 crore.

In 2020, the government modified public procurement norms to give maximum preference to companies whose goods and services have 50 per cent or more local content to promote 'Make in India'.

The revised Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India), Order 2017, has introduced a concept of Class-I, II and non-local suppliers, based on which they will get preference in government purchases of goods and services.

Class-I local suppliers will get the most preference in all government purchases because their domestic value addition is 50 per cent or more. They will be followed by Class-II suppliers, whose value addition range is more than 20 per cent but less than 50 per cent.

India's government procurement market is one of the largest in the world and it is estimated at nearly USD 600 billion annually, or approximately 15 per cent of the country's GDP, as per estimates.

This expenditure fuels development across infrastructure, healthcare, power, education, transport, and defence. However, GP is more than a budgeting tool as it is a critical industrial policy instrument, used to promote local manufacturing, build MSME capacity, and advance national programs like Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

# SHIFTING OIL DEMAND: INDIA OVERTAKES CHINA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** China drove global oil demand growth over the last decade, but now India is poised to take the lead in demand growth over the next decade, according to a latest report by Moody's Ratings.

China and India are No. 2 and No.3 oil consumers in the world. But there are notable differences in demand growth in the two countries.

"Demand growth and import reliance will be higher in India," Moody's said. "Demand will grow faster in India than in China over the next decade, as China's economic growth slows and penetration of new energy vehicles accelerates."

Consumption of crude oil, the raw material for making fuels like petrol and diesel, in China will peak in the next 3-5 years, while in India Moody's expect annual growth of 3-5 per cent in the same period.

Stating that both countries rely heavily on oil and gas imports, the rating agency said it expects China's reliance on oil imports to fall, reflecting slower demand growth and increased domestic production.

Investments in complex shale

gas and offshore projects bolster Chinese NOCs' reserves and production, while Indian NOCs face challenges from aging wells and slow investment. Additionally, Chinese NOCs' greater value chain integration mitigates earnings volatility, and they have lower leverage and higher interest coverage. Moody's saw investment focus vary, reflecting national objectives.

"Chinese NOCs continue to invest heavily in exploration and development to enhance self-sufficiency. Their investments in the downstream refining and petrochemical sectors will gradually decline over the next 3-5 years as most major projects have been completed. By contrast, NOCs in India will still invest heavily to expand refining and petrochemical facilities over the next five years to meet growing domestic demand," it said.

"Indian NOCs plan to boost domestic oil and gas production but execution remains to be seen," it added.

Government policies in China are more market-oriented, it said, adding that policies in both countries are aimed at maintaining price stability and adequate supply.

# Ease in Index trading: ICRA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** Trading activity in index derivatives and options is showing signs of stabilisation, after three consecutive months of decline triggered by regulatory interventions, rating agency ICRA said Thursday.

This stabilisation in index derivatives and options volumes reflects "strategic recalibrations by market participants", ICRA said in a report.

Although margin trading facility (MTF) exposures have retracted closer to ₹71,000 crore from their December 2024 peak, given their strong correlation with market trends, resurgence in investor confidence could drive the trajectory back towards the ₹1 lakh crore mark, the rating agency said.

The phased implementation of regulatory measures, beginning November 2024, led to a sharp contraction of trading activity in index options.

Between December 2024 and March 2025, the average daily premium turnover had declined by 18 per cent compared to the April-November 2024 period, while the number of options contracts traded fell by 60 per cent.

Moreover, order volumes, critical for F&O brokerage, were moderately impacted (down 25-

## India emerging as 'key connector' amid global cues

REUTERS

**Mumbai, May 22:** India's economy remains resilient amid global uncertainties and the outlook for the South Asian nation is one of "cautious optimism", the country's central bank said in its monthly bulletin released late Wednesday.

New Delhi is in the process of seeking to clinch a trade deal with US within the 90-day pause on tariff hikes announced by President Donald Trump on April 9 for major trading partners, including a 26% tariff on India.

"The global economic outlook remains clouded amidst shifting policy landscapes and lingering vulnerabilities," the central bank said.

"India stands well-positioned to navigate the ongoing global headwinds with confidence, ready to harness emerging opportunities and consolidate its role as a key driver of global growth."

In April, the RBI lowered its key policy rate for a second consecutive time, and signalled more cuts by changing its monetary policy stance to 'accommodative' from 'neutral'.

Inflation pressures have eased significantly and the consumer price index is poised for a durable alignment with the target in 2025-26, the RBI said in the bulletin.

India's retail inflation remained below the central bank's 4% target for the third consecutive month in April, slipping to 3.16%, the lowest level since July 2019.

"While policy uncertainty has intensified, supply side pressures on the global economy are showing signs of relenting," the RBI said.

# US fiscal stress sheds benchmark indices

## BSE SENSEX

MAY 22, 2025



CHANGE: -844.84 (-0.78%)



| INDUSIND BANK    | +1.82 % |
|------------------|---------|
| BHARTI AIRTEL    | +0.44 % |
| ULTRATECH CEMENT | +0.10 % |
|                  |         |
|                  |         |
|                  |         |

| NSEI          | -2.59 % |
|---------------|---------|
| BAJAJ FINSERV | -1.80 % |
| TECH MAHINDRA | -1.77 % |
| POWER GRID    | -1.74 % |
| ITC           | -1.58 % |

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 22:** Benchmark Sensex declined by nearly 645 points while Nifty retreated to 24,600 level due to selling in IT, oil and FMCG shares amid a global equity rout triggered by surging bond yields and US debt concerns.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 644.64 points or 0.79 per cent to settle at 80,951.99 with 27 of its constituents ending lower. The index opened lower and tanked further 1,106.71 points or 1.35 per cent to hit a low of 80,489.92 during the day due to across-the-board selling.

The NSE Nifty tumbled 203.75 points or 0.82 per cent to 24,609.70.

From the Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries and Maruti were the biggest laggards. Whereas IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel and UltraTech Cement were the gainers.

"The key benchmark indices

witnessed declines amid US fiscal concerns that the proposed budget bill could significantly increase the national debt, pushing US treasury yields higher due to tepid long-term bond demand. Adding to the pressure, a major credit rating agency's downgrade of the US credit outlook sparked broad-based selloffs across Asian markets," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

US bond yields breached the 5 per cent mark while Japanese bond yields surged to 3.5 per cent which prompted sell-off in riskier assets and emerging markets like India.

In Asian markets, South Korea's KOSPI, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled lower. Markets in Europe were trading in the negative territory.

US markets ended sharply lower Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.37 per cent to USD 64.02 a barrel.

## Aakash warns EY over conflict of interest in Byju's-AESL row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** Aakash Educational Services (AESL) has accused EY of conflict of interest and breach of professional conduct in its ongoing dispute involving Byju's.

It has also asked EY to disclose all documents, information, or communication it was privy to, in relation to transactions involving AESL. The broader legal fight centres on the governance and control of AESL following the failed acquisition by Byju', which has been reeling under charges of mismanagement, and alleged misuse of company funds.

Meanwhile, CrestLaw Partners, acting on behalf of Manipal Group (which holds significant stake in AESL), also approached EY flagging the firm's involvement in advising the Manipal Group in material matters involving tax and regulatory implications, accounting treatment among others, pertaining to AESL.

It added, "Your association in any manner, through anyone, in the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process, is a matter of considerable concern, regret and amounts to misconduct."

# BOOMING SERVICES FIRE UP BUSINESS GROWTH

*Despite rising inflation, India's private sector is surging by numerous activities like new orders and exports which reached to a new high, leading to employment, overall impacting a future retail inflation*

REUTERS

**Bangalore, May 22:** India's private sector activity accelerated at its fastest pace in over a year in May, driven by robust expansion in services even as price pressures intensified, a survey showed Wednesday.

HSBC's Flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) compiled by S&P Global, rose to 61.2 this month from April's 59.7; the sharpest rate of increase since April 2024 and confounding a Reuters poll median forecast for a dip to 59.5.

The 50-mark separates contraction from expansion, and the latest reading showed sustained private sector growth for nearly four years.

"India's flash PMI indicate another month of strong economic performance," said Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC.

Services was the primary growth engine with the industry's PMI jumping to a 14-month high of 61.2 from 58.7. The manufacturing output index held mostly steady at 58.3, maintaining growth momentum.



Services new business inflows surged in both domestic and overseas markets suggest-

ing robust demand. The overall private sector registered the fastest rate of increase in new

orders since April last year with exports at a one-year high.

Businesses remained optimistic on the outlook for the coming year, anticipating healthy demand to support future sales and output.

That allowed companies to recruit additional staff to manage workloads. Employment generation continued its upward trend, reaching a record high since the survey began in December 2005.

"Notably, there is a firm pick-up in the employment, especially in the service sector, suggesting healthy job creation accompanies the expansion of both India's manufacturing and service sectors," Bhandari said.

However, the survey also highlighted escalating inflationary pressures. Input cost

inflation across the private sector hit a five-month high, while prices charged for Indian goods and services rose at the fastest pace since November.

Manufacturing output prices, in particular, increased at the steepest since late-2013, with firms saying they were able to pass on rising expenses to clients due to strong demand.

Those price pressures are likely to feed into India's retail inflation in coming months posing upside risks after April data showed price rises had cooled to a near six-year low, below the Reserve Bank of India's 4% target for a third straight month.

The central bank is widely expected to cut rates for a third consecutive meeting in June, to 5.75%, supported by low inflation.

# Spurs snag Europa glory

OLYMPIC VISION 2036

Govt revamps funding norms for federations

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



**It is the first major title for Tottenham since it won the English League Cup in 2008, and first European triumph since it won its second UEFA Cup — the equivalent of the Europa League now — in 1984**

ing to UEFA. Its 98th victory in the competition Wednesday moves it clear of the joint record of 97 it previously held with Roma. The defeat adds pressure on United coach Ruben Amorim, whose team sits in 16th place — just ahead of Tottenham — in the Premier League. The club won't play in any European competition next season.

"I am not going to talk about the future, tonight we need to deal with the pain of losing this match," Amorim said. "We were the better team and the guys tried everything to win the game."

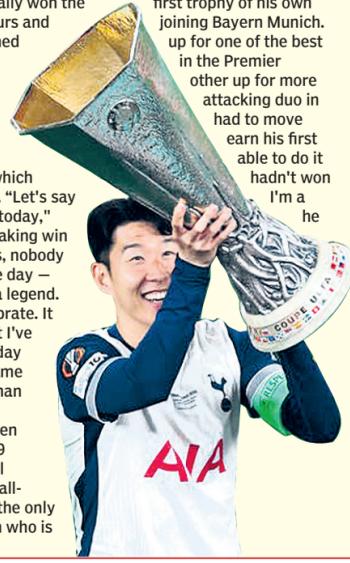
United came close to equalizing the match Wednesday when a header by Rasmus Hojlund was acrobatically cleared at the

"I still can't believe what we've done tonight, it's unbelievable," Vicario said. "We have written history, in the real sense of the term. This group of players has written history in 2025. There was also one Micky van de Ven save, on the line. We knew before the game that we needed the effort from everyone and we did it, we delivered. Now we must celebrate."

It had been an even match, with neither team creating many significant scoring opportunities, until Tottenham got on the board in the 42nd minute after a cross by Pape Sarr into the area. The ball ricocheted off Shaw and fell in front of Johnson, who seemed to get just enough of it to poke it across

## 'Legend' Son shares fate with Kane

There he was, kissing the trophy before lifting it in front of his teammates. It was a dream-come-true moment for Son Heung-min, the South Korea star who finally won his first title in Europe as Tottenham defeated Manchester United in the Europa League final Wednesday. "I felt the pressure. I wanted it so badly," Son said. "The last seven days, I was dreaming about this game every single day. It finally happened, and I can sleep easy now." Only a few weeks ago, Son was congratulating Harry Kane, his former Tottenham teammate. Kane for finally won the first trophy of his own career after leaving Spurs and joining Bayern Munich. Son and Kane had teamed up for one of the best attacking duos in the Premier League, setting each other up for more goals than any other attacking duo in the competition. Kane had to move to Bayern to finally earn his first trophy. But Son was while still with Spurs, which is a major title since 2008. "Let's say legend. Why not? Only today," said of the drought-breaking win with Spurs. "In 17 years, nobody has done it. Today's the day — probably I will say I'm a legend. Let's enjoy it, let's celebrate. It feels amazing. It's what I've always dreamed of. Today is the day the dream came true. I'm the happiest man in the world." Son and Kane were together when Tottenham lost the 2019 Champions League final to Liverpool in another all-English decider. Son is the only starter from that match who is still at Tottenham.



the goal line. "I knew I touched it, and then I looked up because I didn't catch it cleanly," Johnson said. "Then the ball was trickling in the goal. I can't describe the feeling."

United pressed forward after conceding but was not able to get the equalizer in front of a mostly split crowd of nearly

50,000 at Athletic Bilbao's San Mames Stadium.

There were some confrontations between the clubs' supporters overnight as more than 50,000 English fans converged in Bilbao and other nearby Basque Country cities. But it was all mostly peaceful throughout the day of the final Wednesday.

## SHORT TAKES

### Boxing contingent

**New Delhi:** A 19-member squad will represent India at the 4th Thailand Open International Boxing Tournament, scheduled in Bangkok from May 24 to June 1. Held under the aegis of Asian Boxing, the Thailand Open will see top national teams from across the continent compete, including powerhouses like China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Japan, Korea, and host nation Thailand. The squad comprises 10 men and 9 women. The Boxing Federation of India, being run by an interim committee, followed its selection criterion, providing opportunities to silver medalists from this year's men's and women's National Championships. The Thailand Open marks an important international outing in India's boxing calendar, providing a platform to elite boxers to test themselves against Asia's best, with momentum building toward the World Boxing Cup later this year.

### European leg squad

**New Delhi:** Hockey India Thursday announced a 24-member Indian men's team for the European leg of FIH Hockey Pro League to be played in Amstelveen, Netherlands and Antwerp, Belgium, from June 7. India will begin their European leg with two matches each against the Netherlands June 7 and 9, followed by a double header against Argentina June 11 and 12 at the Wagner Stadium in Amstelveen. They will then travel to Antwerp to face Australia on June 14 and 15 before ending their campaign against hosts Belgium June 21 and 22. India played the home leg of the Pro League in Bhubaneswar earlier this year where they secured 15 points with five wins in eight games and now stand third in the points table. With the highest-placed team of the league securing a spot in the 2026 Men's FIH World Cup, India will be hoping to improve upon their performance and win maximum points in the remaining eight matches of the tournament.

### Mhatre to lead India U19 in England tour

**New Delhi:** Mumbai's Ayush Mhatre was Thursday appointed captain of the India U-19 team for next month's tour of England, while 14-year-old batting sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi is also included in the squad. The tour, scheduled to begin June 24, will include a 50-over warm-up match, followed by a five-match Youth One-Day series and two Multi-Day matches against England U19. Suryavanshi's selection comes on the back of a breakthrough IPL season with Rajasthan Royals.

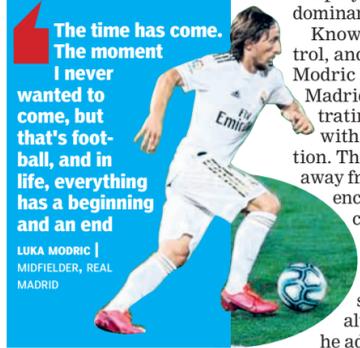
## Real Madrid legend Modric bids adieu

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 22:** After 12 glittering years in the Spanish capital, Luka Modric has announced he will leave Real Madrid following this summer's FIFA Club World Cup.

The Croatian maestro, who has been the heartbeat of Madrid's midfield since 2012, confirmed the emotional news on Thursday through a heartfelt post on Instagram, calling time on an era that saw him become the most decorated player in the club's illustrious history.

Modric's final match at the Santiago Bernabéu will come this Saturday against Real Sociedad in what will be Madrid's final La Liga fixture of the season. While the 39-year-old confirmed he will remain with the squad for their Club World Cup campaign in the United States



**The time has come. The moment I never wanted to come, but that's football, and in life, everything has a beginning and an end**

LUKA MODRIC | MIDFIELDER, REAL MADRID

next month, it will mark the last time he wears the famous white shirt on Spanish soil.

"The time has come. The moment I never wanted to come, but that's football, and in life, everything has a beginning and an end," Modric wrote. "Playing for Real Madrid changed my life as a football player and as a person. I am proud to have been part of one of the most successful eras of the best club in history."

Arriving from Tottenham Hotspur in 2012, Modric overcame a difficult start to etch his name into Real Madrid folklore. With nearly 600 appearances and almost 30 major trophies—including a record six UEFA Champions League titles and four La Liga crowns—Modric's impact has been nothing short of legendary.

His 2018 Ballon d'Or win, breaking the Messi-Ronaldo duopoly, symbolised his quiet dominance on the global stage.

Known for his vision, control, and elegance on the ball, Modric has been the soul of Madrid's midfield, orchestrating countless victories with grace and determination. Though he will soon step away from the pitch, his influence will echo through the club's history.

"Although, after the Club World Cup, I will no longer wear this shirt on the pitch, I will always be a Madridista," he added.

## LSG turn party pooper for GT

Marsh's maiden IPL ton hands Lucknow consolation 33-run win over Gujarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, May 22:** Gujarat Titans messed up on a golden opportunity to seal a top two spot in the league table as Lucknow Super Giants earned a consolation 33-run victory riding on Mitchell Marsh's maiden hundred in the Indian Premier League here Thursday.

Batting first, Marsh's brilliant 117 off 64 balls took LSG to 235 for 2 after stipulated 20 overs.

The total was commanding and LSG did well enough to keep the home team at bay, restricting them to 202 for 9 in 20 overs.

New Zealander Will O'Rourke, who has come in as Mayank Yadav's replacement, was the pick of the bowlers for LSG with figures of 3 for 27.

Shahrukh Khan (57 off 29 balls) did give LSG a scare with some lusty blows but that was never going to be enough in the end despite a riveting 86-run stand with Sherfane Rutherford for the fourth wicket in just 6.4 overs.

GT, who have already qualified for the playoffs, could have taken a giant leap towards top two finish by ensuring 20 points. They will now try to win the last match and give themselves the best chance to finish in top two of the league table with both Punjab Kings and RCB also having a fair shot at the pole position.



The chase of 236 started in earnest with B Sai Sudharsan (21 off 16 balls) and skipper Shubman Gill (35 off 20 balls) starting the innings with some crisp boundaries.

However, the league's current top run accumulator,

Sudharsan couldn't convert the start and Gill despite his short arm pulls was also snapped brilliantly by Abdul Samad.

It was Jos Buttler (33 off 18 balls) who hit a couple of sixes but left-arm fast bowler Akash Singh, who split the webbing of

## IPL STANDINGS

| TEAM | M  | W | L  | NRR    | PTS |
|------|----|---|----|--------|-----|
| GT   | 13 | 9 | 4  | 0.602  | 18  |
| RCB  | 12 | 8 | 3  | 0.482  | 17  |
| PBKs | 12 | 8 | 3  | 0.389  | 17  |
| MI   | 13 | 8 | 5  | 1.292  | 16  |
| DC   | 13 | 6 | 6  | -0.019 | 13  |
| LSG  | 13 | 6 | 7  | -0.337 | 12  |
| KKR  | 13 | 5 | 6  | 0.193  | 12  |
| SRH  | 12 | 4 | 7  | -1.005 | 9   |
| RR   | 14 | 4 | 10 | -0.549 | 8   |
| CSK  | 13 | 3 | 10 | -1.030 | 6   |

his right hand, took pace off a floating delivery that breached the Englishman's defence.

At this point that Shahrukh and Rutherford (38) joined forces and the target that looked improbable till then suddenly started looking gettable.

The LSG bowlers, especially India Test specialist Akash Deep and his state team colleague Shahbaz Ahmed leaked runs. LSG's ground fielding also was not up to the mark.

**BRIEF SCORES:**  
**Lucknow Super Giants:** 235 for 2 in 20 overs (Aiden Markram 36, Mitchell Marsh 117, Nicholas Pooran 56 not out; Sai Kishore 1/34) beat **Gujarat Titans:** 202 for 9 in 20 overs (Shahrukh Khan 57; William O'Rourke 3/27).

## Bengal, Odisha eye next Khelo India Beach Games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Diu, May 22:** Buoyed by the success of the inaugural Khelo India Beach Games here, two eastern coastal states of West Bengal and Odisha have shown interest in hosting the next edition of the sports extravaganza.

The scenic Ghoghla Beach has been buzzing with over 2,100 athletes competing across eight disciplines in this six-day festival. First held last year as a regional event, the Games have now been elevated under the Khelo India banner following a mention in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat'.

Odisha is exploring the possibility of bidding. With a 480-km coastline and venues like Gopalpur, Puri, and Chandipur, the state sees beach sports as a

natural extension of its sporting and tourism ambitions.

"Our 46-member contingent has won one silver and three bronze medals in pencak silat. The Games have been a big success," said Dhiraj Pattanayak, Officer on Special Duty, Sports and Youth Affairs Department. "Hosting KIBG 2026 is something we will definitely consider. It could be the way forward," he added.

Bengal Olympic Association general secretary Jahar Das said the state is ready and willing to host the next edition.

"It's really nice, very beautifully developed. I'm proud of the Union Territory government. Kudos to all the participants -- it's their credit," Das told PTI here. He said Bengal's popular beaches like Digha,



Mandarmani, and Ganasagar offer ideal venues.

"The BOA will give full cooperation. We already have the infrastructure. With Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee promoting tourism and the new Jagannath Temple attracting

lakhs, adding sports would be a double delight. In 2019, we hosted an invitational beach games, and the crowd was mindboggling. In the age of social media, it will get even more traction. Kolkata has perfect connectivity, so logistics won't

**Our 46-member contingent has won one silver and three bronze medals in pencak silat. The Games have been a big success. Hosting KIBG 2026 is something we will definitely consider. It could be the way forward**

DHIRAJ PATTANAYAK | OFFICER ON SPECIAL DUTY, SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, ODISHA

be an issue," he added. Das plans to meet BOA members after returning to Kolkata Saturday to initiate the formal bid process.

"We will write to SAI expressing our interest in hosting KIBG 2026." West Bengal, which sent a

nine-member contingent to Diu, has won two silver medals so far. A third medal chance in 5km open water swimming was lost due to injury Thursday.

"We will work to develop more beach sports athletes. With proper use of the ₹840.03 crore sports budget, Bengal can become a powerhouse," Das said, adding that the state has strong traditions in sepak takraw and beach football.

The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu has undergone a sports infrastructure transformation, led by Secretary of Sports Dr Arun T.

Over ₹300-crore has been spent on infrastructure in the past eight years. A world-class cricket stadium is coming up in Silvassa, alongside archery and athletics facilities.