



## Janhvi's fashion game

Actor Janhvi Kapoor reveals her admiration for Zendaya and Uorfi's innovative fashion choices and sees value in dressing creatively

LEISURE | P2



## 4th Indian held

Canadian authorities arrest 4th Indian national in connection with the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## FPIs on cautious path

Foreign investors pull out massive ₹17,000 crore from Indian equities in the first 10 days of the month

BUSINESS | P11



## Pragg finishes 4th

R Pragnanandhaa finishes 4th in the Superbet Rapid and Blitz chess tourney at Warsaw and also beats World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen again

SPORTS | P12

## SHORT TAKES

### ₹15L for family of dead poll official

**Bhubaneswar:** Odisha's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Nikunja Bihari Dhal said Sunday that the next of kin of a government employee, who died during election duty, would get an ex-gratia of ₹15 lakh as per the ECI guidelines. Alekh Randhari, a Class-IV employee of a government school, died Saturday in a road accident in Nabarangpur district while he was on the way to a polling station for Monday's elections.

### Irrawaddy dolphin carcass found

**Bhubaneswar:** The carcass of an Irrawaddy dolphin was spotted Sunday afternoon on the banks of Chilika lake, officials said. They informed that locals found the dolphin carcass weighing about 35kg and measuring about four feet long lying in Gopbandhu Colony near Balugaon in Khurda district. Officials said that the endangered aquatic animal sustained injuries as it was oozing blood from its mouth. On being informed about the incident, Chilika Wildlife Officer (DFO) Amlan Nayak and other Forest department officials reached the spot and seized the carcass of the dolphin. Later, Nayak told the media that the cause of the dolphin's death would be known after the autopsy. Irrawaddy dolphins have been declared endangered species by the UN.



**PLEDGE TO SERVE:** Students take oath to serve humanity during a function at the Ashwini School and College of Nursing in Cuttack, on the occasion of International Nurses Day, Sunday

## Kejriwal announces his own 'guarantees'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal announced Sunday 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee', listing 10 works that will be done on war-footing, including to 'free' Indian land from Chinese occupation, if the INDIA bloc forms government at the Centre. However, when asked whether he had discussed the 'guarantees' with the other India bloc partners, Kejriwal said 'he did not have the time to do so'. "I am sure they won't mind," he stated.

Addressing a press conference here, the AAP leader said people will have to choose between 'Modi ki Guarantee' and 'Kejriwal ki guarantee'. The latter is a 'brand', Kejriwal asserted.

On 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee', he said 24x7 power supply, good education and health facilities, and arranging two crore jobs for youths every year are part of it. "We worked on management to ensure 24x7 power supply in Punjab and Delhi. We can do it in the entire country. The government schools in the country are in a bad shape. We will arrange good quality education across the country. We know how to do it," Kejriwal asserted.

# Odisha polls 1st phase today

TOTAL OF 280 CANDIDATES IN FRAY FOR 4 LOK SABHA AND 28 ASSEMBLY SEGMENTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** The stage is set for simultaneous elections to four Lok Sabha constituencies and 28 Assembly segments Monday in Odisha. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has made elaborate arrangements to ensure free and peaceful polls, officials said here Sunday. Voting will be held in Berhampur, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Kalahandi Lok Sabha constituencies. The Assembly segments under these four seats will also witness polling.

There are 37 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls, while 243 nominees are in fray for the 28 Assembly seats. The BJD, Congress and the BJP are contesting in all the constituencies, while nominees of some small and regional parties along with independent candidates are also in the fray.

Voting will begin at 7.00am Monday in 7,303 polling stations across the four Lok Sabha seats and their Assembly segments and will continue till 6.00pm, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Nikunja Bihari Dhal, stated Sunday.



The four Lok Sabha seats are spread over six Maoist-affected police districts - Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Kalahandi - and three other districts of Ganjam, Berhampur and Gajapati, officials informed Sunday. Arrangements for web-casting have been made in 60 per cent of the 7,303 polling stations, they added.

Over 1,264 polling stations, including all booths in Maoist-affected areas, have been identified as critical ones, the CEO said. The voting process will involve 53,000 polling personnel, with 715 all-women booths and 39 booths to be run by persons with disability, he said.

CONSTITUENCIES	
<b>Kalahandi (LS)</b>	<b>Berhampur (LS)</b>
• Nuapada	• Chhatrapur
• Khariar	• Gopalpur
• Lanjigarh	• Berhampur
• Junagarh	• Digapahandi
• Dharmagarh	• Chikiti
• Bhawanipatna	• Mohana
• Narla	• Paralakhemundi
<b>Nabarangpur (LS)</b>	<b>Koraput (LS)</b>
• Umerkote	• Gunupur
• Jhariagaon	• Bissam Cuttack
• Nabarangpur	• Rayagada
• Dabugam	• Laxmipur
• Kotpad	• Jeypore
• Malkangiri	• Koraput
• Chittrakonda	• Pottangi

Among the heavyweights contesting in the Lok Sabha polls are sitting MP Saptagiri Ulaka of

Congress from Koraput, former MPs Pradeep Majhi of the BJD and Balabhadra Majhi of the BJP in Nabarangpur, Pradeep Panigrahi of the BJP and BJD's Bhruu Baxipatra in Berhampur.

In the Assembly polls state ministers Jagannath Saraka, Rajendra Dholkia, Odisha Congress chief Sarat Patnaik, and Congress leader Bhakta Charan Das are in the fray. Congress MLAs Taraprasad Bahinipati and Adhiraj Panigrahi, former chief secretary Bijay Patnaik, ex-minister DS Mishra, former Leader of Opposition Pradipta Naik, former MLA Ramesh Chandra Chayu Patnaik are also trying their luck in the Assembly elections.

## 1,717 IN FRAY FOR 4TH ROUND

**New Delhi:** The electoral fate of several prominent candidates like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Union Minister Giriraj Singh, TMC's firebrand leader Mohua Moitra and AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi will be decided Monday when polling will be held in 96 Lok Sabha constituencies across 10 states and Union Territories. A total of 1,717 candidates are in fray for the Lok Sabha seats and more than 19 lakh officials have been deployed at 1.92 lakh polling stations for the over 17.70 crore eligible voters, including 8.73 crore women, in this round of the seven-phase polls.

## Security tightened for Maoist-hit districts

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** Special security arrangements have been made in polling booths located in left wing extremist (LWE) affected areas of Odisha going to polls May 13, Director General of Police (DGP) Arun Sarangi said Sunday. Out of the nine districts where polls will be conducted six, Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Kalahandi - are Maoist affected, he told a press conference here.

Elections will be held in 7,303 polling stations, of which 537 booths are in LWE affected areas. To ensure free and fair elections in these areas, special operational arrangements have been launched, Sarangi said.

"We have launched 539 anti-Naxalite operations in these districts since January first week. One Maoist leader was neutralised in Nabarangpur district, while 138 operational parties of CAPF and 37 units of SOG/DVF (state Armed Police force) are in action," the DGP informed. The forces are conducting operations and area-dominating exercises in the Maoist-hit areas, he said.

To monitor anti-Maoist initiatives, Additional DGP



- Total of 537 polling booths in Maoist-hit districts
- More than 4,500 persons arrested before polls for dealing in drugs, illegal liquor
- 233 illegal arms and cash worth ₹4.1 crore seized

(Operation) S Deva Datta Singh, is camping in LWE affected Kalahandi district, informed Sarangi. Two choppers have been deployed at Jeypore in Odisha and Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh, for use in case of any emergency like evacuation of security forces or shifting of injured personnel, he added.

For the entire first phase elections, 17,000 police personnel, 104 companies of CAPF, 66 platoons of state Armed Police forces have been deployed. Sarangi said that a total of 600 mobile parties have been deployed in all the nine districts to monitor the law and order situation.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I made this rule. It doesn't apply to me

## WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	35.7°C	35.4°C
Min Temp	21.0°C	21.0°C
Humidity	95%	79%
Rainfall	76.8	89.2

**FORECAST**  
Partly cloudy sky with possibility of thunder/lightning

## 3 dead in 2 road mishaps

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, May 12:** Three persons were killed while four others were critically injured in two separate cases of road accidents Sunday, police said.

In the first case, two persons were killed and two others sustained critical injuries after the car they were travelling in, overturned near Buduli under this police limits in Ganjam district. One of the occupants in the car died on the spot while another succumbed to his injuries en route to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. The two injured persons are undergoing treatment at the same hospital. Doctors informed Sunday evening that their condition still remains critical.

On being informed, Bhanjanagar police rushed to the spot and launched an in-

vestigation as to how the mishap occurred. The deceased were identified as Jiten Badatya of Khajuripali under Belguntha police limits and M Pradhan of Belguntha. The injured persons were identified as Debashis Bisoi of Bidipur and Shibashis of Belguntha, police said.

The mishap occurred after the driver lost control on wheels and the car overturned due to over-speeding. Police said that the occupants in the car were returning to Bidipur from Phulbani after attending a religious programme.

In the second mishap, one person died on the spot and two others were injured when two motorcycles were involved in a crash at a place in Bhograi block of Balasore district. The accident occurred on National Highway-57, police said. The conditions of the two injured are critical, officials said.

## Kami scales Mt Everest for record 29th time

**THIS INCIDENTALLY IS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF TIMES A MOUNTAINEER HAS SCALED THE TALLEST PEAK IN THE WORLD**

AGENCIES

**Kathmandu, May 12:** Nepal's legendary mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa made history Sunday by breaking his record for the highest number of ascents of Mt Everest as he scaled the world's highest peak for the 29th time. The 54-year-old veteran climber reached the 8,849-metre peak at 7.25am local time Sunday, according to Rakesh Gurung, director at the Tourism department in the Ministry of Tourism



and Civil Aviation.

The expedition was organised by the 'Seven Summit Treks' and had 20 climbers. All of them reached the peak, informed Thani Guragain, a senior staff in the organisation. "Twenty climbers from 'Seven Summit Treks' including Kami made a

successful ascent of Mt Everest Sunday morning," the organisation said in a statement. The members were from countries including the USA, Canada and Kazakhstan besides 13 climbers from Nepal, it added.

Kami had climbed Mt Everest for the first time in 1994. Last year,

he was successful in scaling Mt Everest twice, his 27th and 28th times. Now he has the world record in his name.

Last year, Pasand Dawa Sherpa of Solukhumbu completed his 27th summit of Everest, but he remains uncertain about attempting the climb this season, according to Republica newspaper.

Kami, a senior mountain guide at 'Seven Summit Treks', was born January 17, 1970. His mountaineering journey began in 1992 when he joined an expedition to Mt Everest as a supporting staff. Since then, Kami has fearlessly embarked on several expeditions. Besides Mt Everest, he has also conquered 'Mt K2', 'Cho Oyu', 'Lhotse', and 'Manaslu'.

Meanwhile, renowned British climber Kenton Cool scaled Mt Everest for the 18th time Sunday. In the process he became the

only foreigner to have reached the peak so many times. He broke his own British record for the most summits of the world's highest peak, *The Himalayan Times* reported.

Ten mountain guides from Nepal successfully scaled Friday the world's highest peak after they fixed the ropes in the mountain clearing the route for other climbers. As the rope-fixing job has been completed, Mt Everest is now open for mountaineers from both Nepal and foreign countries to climb, said Chun Bahadur Tamang, an official at the Mountaineering Section of the Department of Tourism. The rope-fixing work started Friday morning and concluded at night.

Altogether 414 climbers from 41 expeditions have acquired permission to scale Mount Everest this season.

# leisure



## ANISTON PAYS ODE TO FRIENDS CHARACTER RACHEL GREEN

Actress Jennifer Aniston expressed her love for her *Friends* character Rachel Green and her iconic hairstyles. She took to Instagram along with her haircare brand and shared throwback photos of her hair styled with clips and hairbands throughout the different seasons of the popular show, which aired from 1994 to 2004.

## I WAS MAKING MORE MONEY THAN MY PARENTS BY 18: CINDY

Model Cindy Crawford has revealed that she was making more money than her parents by 18. Cindy shared, "I started modelling in Chicago, and it's a small pond, so I was the big fish pretty quickly there. And I was making more money than my parents made, more money than they could ever have dreamed of."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
You've finally realised that diet and exercise are a must, and you especially need to take good care. Today, you may wish to eat something different. Tried Mongolian cuisine? Ganesh suggests that you go out with some friends who you've not been paying attention to.

**TAURUS**  
You will spend your day in the company of near and dear ones, says Ganesh. Family and friends might gather at your place and you will leave no stone unturned in welcoming them to your nest. In all probability, home makers will be able to shine in cooking as well as hosting, foresees Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you may be busy purchasing food supplies or penning an inventory. In your spare time, which you are likely to have in plenty today, you will try to befriend strangers or tread into unfamiliar territories. Such activities will not bring you any harm. A stroll with your sweetheart will nicely conclude a fairly eventful day, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You are feeling lucky today. The problem is that your feelings have nothing to do with the ground reality. So, while you may get busy trying your luck at risky speculative markets, Ganesh may get increasingly worried about the losses you may incur because of your foolishness.

**LEO**  
Today, the force is with you. Well, at least part of the force that deals with being a smooth talker, says Ganesh. It is your power of expression that comes to the fore and stands you in good stead. Having mastered the art of communication, you now are a wizard of words who conjures showers of pearls with a mere twist of the tongue. When in doubt, people will simply walk up to you for some inspiring talk, and go home satisfied.

**VIRGO**  
Take a break today, says Ganesh. Replace the mundane with something exotic. Attend private dos and social meets and be gregariously gregarious.

**LIBRA**  
No matter what you do, some days are just not happening. Considering the random mood swings that affect you today, it's in the best interest of others that you put up a 'Beware of me' sign. By being forewarned about it, you should be capable of handling your erratic behaviour.

**SCORPIO**  
The day today is riddled with minor, nagging ailments. Adopt a two-pronged strategy, advises Ganesh. One - change your lifestyle, and two - visit your doctor for regular examinations. Ominous at his best, Ganesh counsels to take care of your health.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Be set to capture the flag and sing the victory song in whatever task you take up today. Your subordinates will be the ones needing your support and motivation. At the end of the day, the icing on the cake would be the smile you take to bed.

**CAPRICORN**  
Your intuition will get the better of you today, bagging you respect and recognition, says Ganesh. But it's not every day that you get so lucky, so try and make the most of what's on the platter, for all you know, intuitions could have a mood swing too. Besides, if winning hearts is like a once-in-a-blue-moon thing, be on your best behaviour and wear your best suit - it's a blue moon day for you today.

**AQUARIUS**  
Your mood will swing by the hour today! Naturally, you leave your friends stumped. But unpredictability does not mean that you take unnecessary risk. Ganesh suggests you complete all pending projects, and bear in mind that it is only fools who rush in where angels fear to tread.

**PISCES**  
A hectic day of socialising awaits you. You will discover hidden talents and unnoticed traits about yourself. Either that, or whoever brought them to your notice was only lying to get some socialising action of their own.

## Janhvi's take on method dressing

**Mumbai:** Actress Janhvi Kapoor has shared that she is heavily inspired by American actress Zendaya as well as social media sensation Uorfi Javed, commending their creative fashion styles. The actress was asked by a fan in an Ask Me Anything session on Instagram, "Is it true that you're copying Zendaya?" The diva replied to the query saying, "Yes, I think I'm very heavily inspired by what she did for her *Challengers* and *Dune: Part Two* promotions. And not just her; I think even Uorfi is creative with her fashion."

Stressing more about the dressing and promotion outfits, the *Mili* actress said, "I feel like as actors, we are all encouraged to kind of do method dressing or dress similar to your character when you

are promoting a film. I have never really done it except for *Dhadak*, but when I saw her doing it and doing it so well and dressing according to the theme of the film, I realised that as actors, a good amount of attention is put on how we look and how we dress, and if I can use that to bring attention back to my film, why not. I am really inspired by that and following in her footsteps." Mr. & Mrs. Mahi also star Rajkumar Rao alongside Janhvi and is scheduled to release May 31.



## Kriti's idea of 'ideal' partner

**Mumbai:** Actress Kriti Sanon, who was busy with two successful projects this year, *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* and *Crew*, recently opened up about what qualities she aspires to in her ideal partner. While talking to an entertainment portal, the actress answered how she would find a guy for her who would match up to all the qualities of a successful and smart woman like her.

The *Raabta* actress points out the pressure everyone puts on what one 'wants' rather than what one 'needs'. Both can be different. Even if she lists out what she wants in her partner, there are high chances that she might need a simplistic, just real person. She needs a connection with that person, with whom she can talk for hours and who can make her laugh. Most importantly, who respects her and her work. There are way more important things. She does not believe that someone has to match up to her; he holds his own values and character.

Kriti emphasises that no one should try to match up to others' qualities but should make themselves secure and balanced. Earlier in an interview the actress confirmed that she has been single for a while.

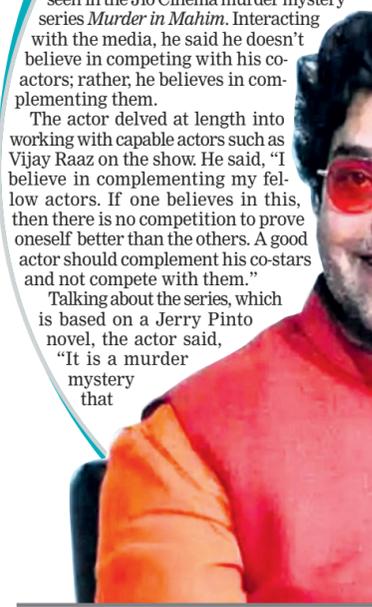


## I believe in complementing co-actors : Ashutosh Rana

**Mumbai:** Known for his powerful performances in mainstream and off-beat films, Ashutosh Rana is now being seen in the Jio Cinema murder mystery series *Murder in Mahim*. Interacting with the media, he said he doesn't believe in competing with his co-actors; rather, he believes in complementing them. The actor delved at length into working with capable actors such as Vijay Raaz on the show. He said, "I believe in complementing my fellow actors. If one believes in this, then there is no competition to prove oneself better than the others. A good actor should complement his co-stars and not compete with them."

Talking about the series, which is based on a Jerry Pinto novel, the actor said, "It is a murder mystery that starts with a crime. Through my character, Peter Fernandes, you will get to know the journey from death to life. A murder happens in the show, and through that murder, you will get to know the issues in Mumbai at that time. The effect on society, family relations, generation gap, and all these facets are touched upon in the show."

*Murder in Mahim* is currently streaming on Jio Cinema.



## Alia on her relationship dynamics with Ranbir

**Mumbai:** Actress Alia Bhatt has opened up about some of the things she has learned from her husband, Ranbir Kapoor. Speaking with a magazine agency, she also shared how Ranbir handles failure and success.

The *Gangubai Kathiawadi* actress said, "Ranbir and I handle things differently. I am more contemplative, a bit of an overthinker, while he prefers to shake off the dust and move on quickly. It's this difference that helps us support each other, providing balance when it's needed the most."

She also added, "But both of us choose to focus on work with a lot of love and immense respect. We work like it is not part of our lives, a very important one, but not the whole of our lives."

Ranbir Kapoor and Alia tied the knot in an intimate wedding ceremony held at the former's Bandra residence, Vastu, April 14, 2022, after dating for five years. The couple also welcomed their first child in November of the same year.

On the work front, Alia will be seen in Vasan Bala's *Jigra*.

### PEANUTS



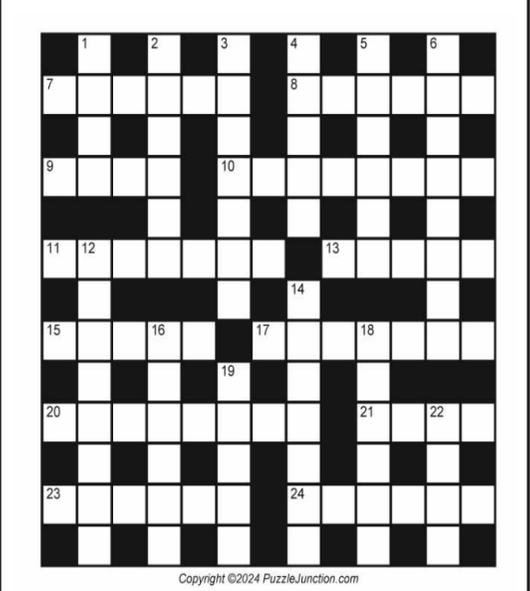
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Basketball scores
  - 8 Anxiety disorder
  - 9 Effrontery
  - 10 Like some telephone calls
  - 11 Contempt
  - 13 Logger's leftover
  - 15 Piquant
  - 17 *Just So Stories* author
  - 20 Folksy
  - 21 Work party
  - 23 Chickpea, e.g.
  - 24 Artificial
  - 4 "The final frontier"
  - 5 Humorous remark (3,3)
  - 6 Aromatic bark
  - 12 Unseemly
  - 14 Bride-to-be
  - 16 Bank draft
  - 18 Migratory grasshopper
  - 19 Fling
  - 22 Young newts
- Down**
- 1 Scintilla
  - 2 Went fishing
  - 3 Headache reliever

### 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.

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

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

T	A	S	K	S	H	R	A	P	N	E	L
A	T	B	A	D	O	U					
P	A	Y	R	O	L	L	I	N	T	E	R
R	L	U	V	E	A	E					
O	D	E	O	N	E	Q	U	I	T	Y	
O		T	S								
M	A	R	T	Y	R		R	A	I	S	I
S	E										
I	G	U	A	N	A		P	U	L	S	E
E	A	G	N	E	E						
P	A	T	I	O			G	R	A	M	M
C	H	A	R	A	D	E	S				
I											

**SUDOKU**

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## Claims on packaged food could be misleading: ICMR



**New Delhi, May 12:** Food labels on packaged items can be misleading, apex health research body the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said stressing that consumers should read the information carefully to make informed and healthy choices.

It also pointed out that sugar-free foods may be loaded with fats, while packed fruit juices may contain only 10 per cent fruit pulp.

In its recently issued dietary guidelines, ICMR said health claims on packaged food are designed to catch the consumer attention and convince them that the product is healthy.

"Though the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has strict norms, the information presented in labels could be misleading," the dietary guidelines for Indians issued by the Hyderabad based National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) under the apex health research body said Wednesday.

Giving some examples, the NIN said a food product can be called 'natural' if it doesn't have added colours and flavours or artificial substances and goes through minimal processing.

"This term is often used rather loosely. It is often used by manufacturers to identify one or two natural ingredients in the mix and this can be misleading," it

■ When a food label says 'organic', it may simply mean that it is free of all artificial preservatives, flavours and colours and that the food ingredients are free from pesticides and chemical fertilisers

■ If both the above are met, then the label can state 100 per cent organic and have the 'Jaivik Bharat' logo approved by the FSSAI

said, urging people to read the label, specifically the ingredients and other information carefully to cross-check the claims.

The NIN presented some examples of statements on labels that could be misleading.

For the claim 'real fruit or fruit juice', the NIN said that according to the FSSAI regulation, any food item with even a small amount, for example, fruit juices containing only 10 or less per cent of fruit added to a product is allowed to state that the product is made with real fruit pulp or juice.

But the product claiming to have real fruit may have added sugar and other additives with only 10 per cent actual fruit pulp.

As for 'Made with whole grain', it said these words could be misinterpreted. Such a statement does not necessarily imply that the food items are not tertiary or ultra processed.

When a food label says 'or-

ganic', it may simply mean that it is free of all artificial preservatives, flavours and colours and that the food ingredients are free from pesticides and chemical fertilisers.

If both the above are met, then the label can state 100 per cent organic and have the 'Jaivik Bharat' logo approved by the FSSAI.

Further, it said that people often associate sugar-free foods with lower calories and perceive these to be beneficial for diabetics and weight watchers.

"Sugar-free foods may be loaded with fats, refined cereals (white flour, starch) and even hidden sugars (maltitol, fructose, corn syrup, molasses). These would imply high glycemic index and high calories in the food item," the NIN stated.

Although nutrition and health claims are regulated by FSSAI, consumers are advised to exercise caution by cross-checking the claims with ingredients and nutrition information on the label, the guidelines recommended.

According to the guidelines, manufacturers also use labels to make incorrect and incomplete claims about their food products.

There is a general misconception that 'nutrition facts' and 'nutrition/nutrient claims' are the same.

Nutrition claims refers to any statement which suggests or implies that a food has particular nutritional properties. Claims like 'low calorie', 'high fibre', 'low fat' or 'low sodium' is not complete information. These have to be substantiated by providing the actual values or nutritional facts about the product.

In the label, under the words 'nutrition facts', there is a statement on the 'serving size'. This is one of the most important pieces of information on the label because all of the nutrition information shown is based on the referred serving size, the guidelines stated.

### LORD'S SERVICE

Traditional artisans begin preparation of chariots for upcoming Ratha Jatra in Puri, Sunday



**BOOK LAUNCH:** Dharitri and Orissa POST Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy among guests during the launch of autobiography 'Nandini Satpathy: The Iron Lady of Orissa' authored by Pallavi Rebbapragada at Walking BookFairs in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

## 'Nandini Satpathy, an icon who we should celebrate'

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** Walking BookFairs played host to the unveiling of the newly released book, 'Nandini Satpathy: The Iron Lady of Orissa' by eminent writer Pallavi Rebbapragada on the bookstore premises here, Sunday. The author signed copies of the book and interacted with the audience during the event.

The bookstore founders Akshaya Bahibala and Satabdi Mishra were present on the occasion.

A discussion was organised at the event wherein the author spoke about her journey while writing the book, and about the things that impressed her about Nandini Satpathy.

The book tells the riveting journey of Nandini Satpathy, the only woman chief minister of the state, who had earlier joined the Indira Gandhi Cabinet as I&B Minister. Moreover, in Delhi circles, she is best remembered as 'Indira



Walking BookFairs founders Akshaya Bahibala and Satabdi Mishra with author Pallavi Rebbapragada

Gandhi's friend'. Nandini's political career was as tumultuous as her friendship with Indira. They were a close-knit duo, brought together by circumstances and kept together

by a strong sense of affection and loyalty, according to some excerpts from the book.

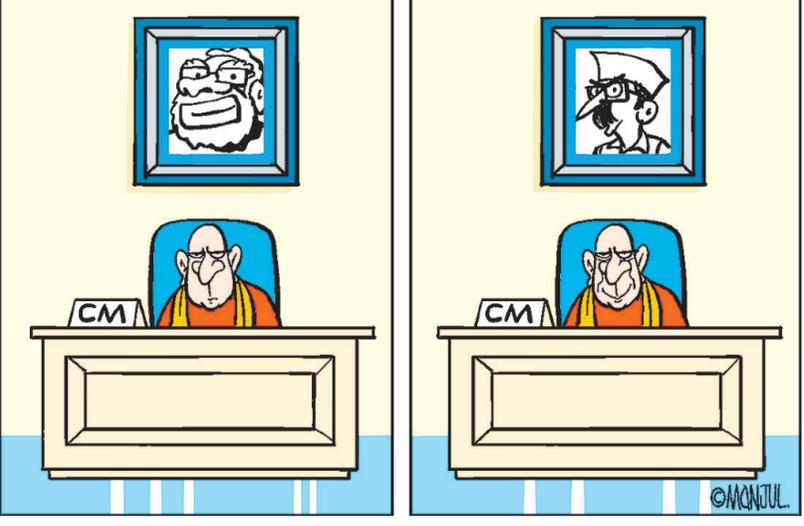
About writing the book on Nandini, Pallavi said, "I stumbled upon this subject during a story

on women reservation issue and during that time I learnt about her and realised we still know very less about her life work." About the research, she said, "It was very difficult as there was very little about her as we don't maintain archive which is sad." She said that due to the patriarchal network there is little information about women leaders of the country than men which is sad and unfortunate. During her research, she said, she found many things about her in international media where there are lot of stories on her, rather than Odisha and India.

"She was ahead of her time. She was not only a minister, but also an able administrator; a literature, writer, mother; wife and a good human being," she said.

She said, "Nandini Satpathy is an icon who we should celebrate. This is a woman who has done so much for the state and people, so we owe this much to remember her. This book is a celebration of her life."

### POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## 13 'crorepatis' for 5 LS seats in fifth phase

Sitting MP and BJP's nominee for Bolangir seat, Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo, is the richest candidate, with total assets worth ₹67.30 crore



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** A total of 13 of the 40 candidates in fray for the five Lok Sabha seats in Odisha that are going to polls in the fifth phase May 20 are 'crorepatis', according to a report. Sitting MP and BJP's nominee for Bolangir seat, Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo, is the richest candidate, with total assets worth ₹67.30 crore.

Aska, Bargarh, Bolangir, Kandhamal and Sundargarh Lok Sabha seats and 35 Assembly constituencies falling under these

parliamentary constituencies will go to polls in the fifth phase, and second in the state.

According to the report brought out by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Odisha Election Watch, Singh was followed by Sundargarh's two major contestants - BJD's Dilip Tirkey (₹12.26 crore) and former Union minister and BJP MP Jial Oram (₹8.63 crore).

Three candidates with the lowest assets were National Apni Party's Bargarh nominee Devika Sika (₹10,000), Bolangir's

Independent candidate Baram Sa (₹30,000) and SUCI's Sundargarh nominee Justin Lugin (₹33,000), the report stated.

The average assets per candidate in fray for the five seats were ₹3.05 crore.

Among major parties, the average assets per candidate for five BJP candidates was ₹16.27 crore, followed by five BJD candidates (₹4.58 crore) and an equal number of Congress nominees (₹2.17 crore), it said.

The report also stated that 12 candidates (30 per cent) declared the criminal cases registered against them, and of them, eight faced serious charges.

A total of 21 candidates (52 per cent) were graduates or had higher qualifications.

Elections to 21 Lok Sabha and 147 assembly constituencies will be held in Odisha in four phases from May 13 to June 1, while the results will be declared June 4.

## Modi's roadshow at Puri May 20

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Odisha again May 20 to boost BJP's poll campaign.

This was informed by BJP leader Golak Mohapatra at a press meet here Sunday.

He informed that PM Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda will also visit the state on different days to address public rallies for the next phase of elections.

Mohapatra said that the PM will go to Puri where he will hold a roadshow in the morning in support of Puri Lok Sabha candidate Sambit Patra and Assembly nominee Jayant Sarangi.

The same day, PM will hold two political rallies in Angul and Cuttack. After that, he will canvass for Dhenkanal Lok Sabha candidate Rudra Narayan Pani and other party nominees in the constituency, Mohapatra said.

Similarly, he will also address a public gathering seeking votes for BJP candidate Bhartruhari Mahtab from Cuttack and other Assembly nominees, he added.

This will be his second roadshow in the state during the on-going elections after the one held at the Capital May 10.

Mohapatra also informed that Union Home Minister Amit Shah will also come to Odisha May 15 and he will address separate rallies at Rourkela of Sundargarh, Kantabanji of Bolangir, and Sorada of Aska Lok Sabha constituencies.

Mohapatra added that Shah's visit will be followed by BJP's national president JP Nadda's visit May 17. Nadda will address public meetings at Sundargarh, Hinjili and Padampur.

## Two arrested for theft in Mo Bus

**Bhubaneswar:** The police Sunday claimed to have arrested two women in connection with a mobile theft in Mo Bus, following the arrest of a woman in the case. The arrested women are identified as Rani Singh, 20, and Laxmi Singh, 22. Both are natives of West Bengal, said IIC of Chandrasekharpur police station Prakash Chandra Majhi, adding that their accomplice, Lajabati Singh, was held by police, Saturday. IIC Majhi said a case was registered at Chandrasekharpur police station by complainant, Parbati Singh, alleging that her mobile phone was stolen by miscreants, while she was on-board from Baramunda Bus Stand to Omfed Square, April 10. "The police, later, launched an investigation into the incident and arrested Lajabati within few hours. The police have booked the duo under Sections 379 and 34 of IPC. Meanwhile, Lajabati Singh was produced before a local court Saturday.

## Anaemia posing a significant health challenge in India

A deficiency of healthy red blood cells or haemoglobin needed to carry oxygen to the body's tissues raises the risk of anaemia. Lack of a proper iron-rich diet, particularly among girls and women in their reproductive age can result in tiredness, weakness, and shortness of breath, health experts noted.

According to the National Family Health Survey 5 (NFHS-5, 2019-21), 25 per cent of men (aged 15-49 years) and 57 per cent of women (aged 15-49 years) suffer from anaemia.

"Anaemia is a very common and another rampant problem in Indian ladies, especially, due to intake of a diet low in iron and sometimes, it is genetically determined also. A vegetarian diet is quite low in iron and hence, supplements are necessary," M

According to the National Family Health Survey 5 (NFHS-5, 2019-21), 25 per cent of men (aged 15-49 years) and 57 per cent of women (aged 15-49 years) suffer from anaemia



Wali, Senior Consultant, department of Medicine, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital told IANS. "Most Indian urban women who are dieting to reduce weight become deficient and rural women because of hard work, increased requirements, and increased loss of the menstrual blood due to infection or other-

Common indicators of anaemia include fatigue, pale complexion, breathlessness, dizziness, and cold extremities

wise repeated childbirth," Wali said. The NFHS- data shows that anaemia is also highly prevalent among young adolescent boys (31 per cent), and adolescent girls (59 per cent) aged between 15 and 19 years, as well as in pregnant women (52.2 per cent) between 15 and 49 years, and

also in small children (67 per cent) aged between 6 months and below 5 years.

Common indicators of anaemia include fatigue, pale complexion, breathlessness, dizziness, and cold extremities. "Anaemia poses a significant health challenge in India, especially for women as they are more prone to lower haemoglobin levels owing to their distinct physiological requirements, including menstrual and pregnancy-related blood loss," Rahul Bhargava, Principal Director and Chief BMT, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, told IANS.

The health experts pointed out that the condition progresses slowly and discreetly, and are difficult to detect. The symptoms also tend to appear late. They advised eating foods rich

in iron or taking supplements. "Anaemia is very difficult to detect, most of the time it is slowly developing. Symptoms like breathlessness (an important symptom), chest pain (sometimes mistaken as heart pain), difficulty in pregnancy, palpitation, headache, and easy fatigability appear very late," Wali said.

"Many women quietly battle anaemia - a preventable threat in India. By promoting a balanced diet rich in iron, advocating for accessible iron supplements available through government systems, and emphasising regular screening, we can empower women to combat anaemia and embrace healthier lives together," Ameeta Babre, National Programme Manager at Nutrition International, told IANS.

# Odisha ahead of Gujarat in various parameters: Pandian

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** BJD leader Kartik Pandian Sunday claimed that Odisha is 'much ahead' of Gujarat in various parameters, in a rebuttal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise that the BJP would make the eastern state 'number one' in the country if voted to power after the Assembly polls.

Pandian shared statistics, comparing various indices of Gujarat and Odisha, with a comment, "Look who wants to make Odisha number one."

"It is ironic that even after two-and-half decades of BJP rule in Gujarat, the situation as compared to Odisha is quite dismal. In terms of malnutrition, the rate is 30 per cent in Odisha whereas it is 40 per cent in Gujarat," he said in a statement.

Quoting NHFS-5 (National Health Family Survey) data, Pandian said the prevalence of anaemia among women was 65 per cent in the state, while it was 69 per cent in Gujarat, whereas 64 per cent of children in the state were anaemic, but the percentage was 80 in Gujarat.

The BJD leader said Odisha fared much better than Gujarat in terms of immunisation, with 90 per cent of children having been vaccinated, compared to only 76.3 per cent in the western state.

More than 86 per cent of women in the state have bank accounts, compared to 70 per cent in Gujarat, he said, adding that



over 50 per cent of women in the eastern state have mobile phones whereas only 48.8 per cent of women in Gujarat have access to the device.

"Per capita debt in Gujarat was ₹60,000, almost thrice than that of Odisha's ₹22,000," he added.

As per RBI handbook, primary enrolment ratio in schools was almost 98 per cent in Odisha, compared to just 90 per cent in Gujarat, he said.

"Gujarat lagged behind Odisha despite Modi heading the western state for three terms before becoming the prime minister," he quoted.

Pandian shared the statistics a day after the PM, while addressing election rallies here Saturday, assured people that the saffron party would develop the eastern state and make it number one in the country within five years if voted to power after the Assembly polls.

Earlier, Pandian challenged the state BJP to declare its CM candidate and claimed that the party will heavily suffer if it names any of its current state

leaders.

Campaigning for the Sundergarh Lok Sabha seat recently, Pandian said BJP has been 'day-dreaming' about forming government in Odisha since 2014.

"When elections come many leaders come as election tourists, and then they are not seen for five years," he said.

"It's a very old habit of BJP leaders of Odisha to daydream about forming government as Naveen Patnaik has said. They have been daydreaming since 2014," he added.

"PM Modi is claiming that the BJP chief minister will take oath on June 10. The people of Odisha have the right to know who is the BJP's CM candidate. Let the people decide between Naveen Patnaik and the BJP candidate. The BJP is afraid to declare its CM candidate because they know that if they choose any one of the current leaders, they will get less than 10 per cent votes," Pandian commented.

In an indirect reference to Pandian's earlier assertion that he is the natural successor to all great values of CM Patnaik, PM Modi on an election rally said, "I am here to invite you to the swearing-in ceremony of the BJP chief minister in Bhubaneswar June 10. A son or daughter of the soil who understands the state's culture, language and tradition will be made the CM."



**WATERLOGGED:** People walk on a submerged road near Sutahat area in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## Cyclists' awareness ride on climate change

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** As many as 51 cyclists participated in the second edition of mid-night cycling 'The Twilight Tour' organised by Racers and Runners Club here recently.

The event was flagged off by Principal Commissioner of Income Tax Saroj Kumar Mahapatra.



The ride started from City at 6pm and reached Puri Jagannath Temple around 9:30pm. After taking Lord's blessings, the riders proceeded towards Konark.

After taking a short break at the Chandrabhaga beach, the cyclists started their return journey around 3:30am in the morning. They covered 175km of the golden triangle route in almost 13hours.

"The ride was aimed at generating awareness on climate change and leading a healthy lifestyle," informed the club president Brajendu Das.

Das along with general secretary Sujit Kumar Goswami and chairman Dilip Mishra participated in the tour. The cyclists were felicitated after completing the ride.

The club, which was formed March 14, 2021, has members across different age groups of the society, including administrative officials, doctors, engineers and businessmen.

# Only 12% women in phase-V LS polls: ADR Yellow warning for next 5 days: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** The representation of women in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls continues to remain dismally low, as only about 12 per cent of the candidates in the fifth phase are female, according to an analysis by poll rights body ADR.

The ADR analysis also showed that nearly 23 per cent have declared criminal cases against themselves and about 18 per cent have serious criminal cases pending.

Out of the total 695 candidates in the fifth phase May 20, only 82 of them are women, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said.

In the first phase of the elections, 135 (8 per cent) female candidates contested while 100 (8 per cent) women candidates fought in the second phase. Similarly, in the third phase of the elections, 123 (9 per cent) female candidates contested while in the fourth phase, as many as 170 (10 per cent) such candidates are in the fray.

Out of the 695 candidates under scrutiny in the fifth phase, 18 per cent (122 candidates) have serious criminal cases pending, including that of murder, attempt to murder, crimes against women, and hate speech.

Three candidates have declared convictions against them. The ADR and National Election Watch analysed self-sworn affidavits filed by the candidates contesting in the phase five to get their criminal backgrounds, financial profiles, education, and gender.

The report also gave a party-wise break-up of criminal cases. Among the major parties, two (50 per cent) out of four candidates from AIMIM, four (40 per cent) out of 10 candidates from SP, seven (39 per cent) out of 18 candidates from the Congress,

two (33 per cent) out of six candidates from Shiv Sena, 12 (30 per cent) out of 40 candidates from BJP, two (29 per cent) out of seven candidates from TMC, one (25 per cent) out of four candidates from the RJD and one (13 per cent) out of eight candidates from Shiv Sena (UBT) have declared serious criminal cases against themselves.

According to the ADR report, 29 candidates have declared cases related to crime against women. Out of 29 candidates, one has declared charge related to rape (IPC Section 376) and 10 have declared cases related to hate speech.

A notable 33 per cent of the candidates are 'crorepatis' (those with assets exceeding ₹1 crore). The average asset per candidate

stood at ₹3.56 crore. The top three candidates with the highest assets have declared values ranging from ₹110 crore to ₹212 crore.

Moreover, 47 per cent of the candidates have declared liabilities, with some having high debt burdens amounting to tens of crores of rupees.

However, the educational qualifications of candidates raise concerns, with 42 per cent having qualifications between 5th and 12th standard, and only 50 per cent being graduates or above.

Additionally, 26 candidates are diploma holders, 20 are just illiterate, and five are illiterate, the ADR said.

In response to these findings, the ADR has put forward a series of recommendations to address the issue of criminalisation in politics, including permanent disqualification of candidates convicted of serious crimes, cancellation of tax exemptions for parties fielding tainted candidates, and parties being brought under the Right to Information Act.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** According to Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) centre here, rainfall activities are very likely to occur over several districts in the state till May 19. IMD also issued yellow warning for next five days.

Light to moderate rainfall has occurred at most places over the districts of Coastal Odisha and at a few places over the districts of Interior Odisha, according to IMD's mid-day bulletin. Heavy rainfall occurred at one or two places over the districts of Cuttack, Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Nayagarh, Balasore, Deogarh, Keonjhar and Bhubaneswar.

The state recorded the highest maximum temperature of 41.4 degrees Celsius in Boudh and the lowest minimum temperature of 20 degrees Celsius at Talcher Sunday.

IMD's evening bulletin predicted light to moderate rain/thundershower very likely to occur at a few places over the districts of Coastal Odisha,

Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Angul, Dhenkanal, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Koraput, and at one or two places over the rest districts of the state May 13.

IMD also issued 'yellow warning' for May 13 over several districts. Thunderstorm with lightning accompanied with gusty surface wind speed reaching 30-40kmph very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Balasore, Bhubaneswar, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj. Heavy Rainfall very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Rayagada, Koraput, Ganjam,

Gajapati, Puri, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore and Bhubaneswar, told IANS.

Light to moderate rain, with thundershower may occur at many places over the districts of Coastal Odisha and at a few places over the districts of Interior Odisha May 14, IMD informed.

There will be no large change in maximum temperature (day) during next 3 to 4 days. Capital city may witness partly cloudy sky with possibility of thunder and lightning. Maximum and minimum temperature will be very likely to be around 35 degrees Celsius and 23 degrees Celsius respectively, informed the regional MeT centre here.



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## Rahul to lead bike rally in Bolangir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is scheduled to take part in a bike rally in Bolangir May 15. Congress candidate for Bolangir Assembly seat Samarendra Mishra said Gandhi will participate in the bike rally May 15 and also address a public meeting.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will address rallies at Rourkela, Sorada and Kantabanji May 15, informed state BJP vice-president Golak Mohapatra.

BJP president JP Nadda will campaign in Padampur, Sundergarh and Hinjili May 17, he added.

The state will vote simultaneously for its 21 Lok Sabha seats and the 147-member Assembly in four phases, starting May 13.

# 1 in 5 new mothers experiences postpartum depression

**W**hile parenthood comes as a blessing for many, for more than 20 per cent of mothers, the new chapter of life creates stress, anxiety and postpartum depression, which can turn fatal for both the mother and child, without adequate support, said doctors on Mother's Day Sunday.

Mother's Day is celebrated every year on the second Sunday of May. Postpartum depression is common but a treatable medical condition that many women face after childbirth. While the exact cause can be difficult to identify, several factors contribute to these feelings of sadness, anxiety, and tiredness.

These can result from genetics, hormonal changes, sleep deprivation, fatigue, or the pressure of becoming a mother.

The overall pooled estimate of the prevalence of postpartum

depression was 22 per cent reporting postpartum depression within two weeks of delivery.

"The journey to parenthood presents couples with a myriad of challenges, often impacting their emotional well-being profoundly. The complexities surrounding late pregnancies, assisted conception methods like IVF, and the burden of preterm deliveries weigh heavily on maternal mental health," Saurabh Mehrotra, Associate Director, Psychiatry, Institute of Neurosciences, Medanta, Gurugram, told IANS.

Studies reveal that maternal mental illness during pregnancy correlates with adverse outcomes for both mother and child, including preterm delivery and poor neurodevelopment.

"At Medanta, we witness approximately 70-80 per cent of



mothers having postpartum blues out of which 20 per cent of mothers with postpartum depression grapple with such mental health challenges, emphasising the critical need for

comprehensive emotional support and holistic care throughout the perinatal period," Saurabh said.

The symptoms of postpartum depression include insomnia,

loss of appetite, intense irritability, and even difficulty bonding with the baby. For mothers facing the postpartum blues, asking for help may be one of the most crucial steps, as it may help them easily bond with the

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# Illegal blackstone mining in Jajpur poses threat to school kids, trains



uated at a distance of 200 metres from the railway line. The mining of black stones from the quarries near the railway track has raised concerns over the safety of the railway track and the trains running on it.

Moreover, four stone crusher units functioning on plot nos-2733, 2594, 2704 and 2705 near the black stone quarries has resulted in heavy air and sound pollution. This has severely hit studies of the students and seriously affected their health.

This has angered the residents as over 100 villagers, including Nirmal Nayak, Harihar Sahu, Pratap Rana, Anand Behera, Pramod Behera, Anam Behera, Sahadev Rana, Mohan Nayak, Chittaranjan Jena and others have lodged written complaint with the district Collector.

Until a year ago, the Minor Minerals department used to function under the Revenue department. But now it has got a separate office at Jajpur. The office is headed by a deputy director with five officers to support him.

It is alleged that illegal mining and smuggling of minor minerals like murrums, black stones, sand, laterite stones have become rampant in Jajpur district after the establishment of this office. Residents have also alleged that illegal black stone mining and smuggling is not only limited to Aruha panchayats, but similar looting of the black stones worth crores are also taking place from Dankari, Rahadpur, Bichhakhandi hills under the Dharmasala tehsil.

They said that a firm, VCI Industries Private Ltd, took land from the state government for establishment of its plant, but instead used the land for murrum mining and smuggled murrums worth ₹20 crores outside.

fecting their health. Peeved at the state of affairs, the locals have made a written complaint to the Jajpur Collector demanding immediate closure of the illegal black stone quarries and stringent legal action against the smugglers.

They have also filed similar complaints before the Director of Minor Minerals department, Principal Secretary of Steel and Mines department and the regional officer of the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) at Kalinganagar.

Residents alleged that black stone looting from the quarries in Aruha panchayat has become rampant in complete violation of pollution norms. This is happening as revenue officials have failed to collect penalty from the lease holders on the basis of satellite mapping of the mines carried out earlier.

They alleged that two black stone quarries - BSQ-2 quarry number 16/16-17 and 34/21-22 - are situated at a distance of 500 metres from the school. Similarly, the BSQ-1 quarry number 10/17-18, quarry number-35/21-22 and quarry number -36/21-22 are sit-

uated at a distance of 500 metres from the school. Similarly, the BSQ-1 quarry number 10/17-18, quarry number-35/21-22 and quarry number -36/21-22 are sit-

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, May 12:** Rampant illegal mining of black stones from quarries in Aruha panchayat under Dharmasala tehsil in Jajpur district has not only put the lives of hundreds of students of a primary school to imminent hazards but also raises concerns over safety of trains (and passengers) plying on the nearby tracks, a report stated.

Locals alleged that black stones are being extracted from a quarry on a plot (no-2677), through blasting of explosives, which is situated in close proximity of Tarakasuni Primary School in Aruha panchayat. The miners while mining stones never spare a thought about the safety of the children. Moreover, black stones are also being extracted from four other quarries in the panchayat where a rail line, farmlands and the school are situated in close vicinity.

The deafening sound during explosive blasts at the quarries sparks fear among the children, while the pollutants emanating from there and adjoining crusher units is seriously af-

## Minor boy meets watery grave

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, May 12:** In a tragic incident, a 14-year-old boy drowned in a pond at Panigrahi Pentha sahi under Badabazar police limits of the city, in Ganjam district, Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Rohit Kumar Sahu who lived in Shreeram Nagar area.

According to reports, Rohit had gone to take a bath in the pond at around 10am, Sunday. However, he slipped while bathing on the stairs at the edge of the pond and fell into deep waters. Other people who were taking bath in the pond immediately informed the family members of the boy about the incident, and subsequently, police and fire brigade team reached the spot. They launched a rescue operation.

The fire brigade personnel managed to fish out the boy from the water after a while. He was rushed to MKCG Medical College and Hospital at Berhampur where doctors pronounced him dead. Police, after registering a case of unnatural death, sent the body for post-mortem which confirmed that the boy had died due to drowning. The body was handed over to the family members later.

## Summer camp helping rural talents dream big



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 12:** The Summer Coaching Camp organized by the sports department of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), has been a transformative platform nurturing young talents from rural backgrounds and helping them realise their aspirations of representing the state and the country in sports.

The camp's Kabaddi Training Programme, currently underway at the Indoor Stadium in Sector-20 of the Steel City is witnessing participation of many young talents.

Sunita Mahakul, a 16 year old budding talent from the Bandega Village of Lephripada Block, attending the camp for the third straight year, attrib-

utes much of her success to the camp. Millia Kujur wiped the dust off her jersey after a strenuous session in the camp to talk about her passion for the sport. "I thank RSP for organizing such a programme because of which I could live my dream."

Millia hails from a remote village of Balishankara Block. Both Sunita and Millia, who belong to marginal agrarian families, aspire not only to excel in Kabaddi, but also join the police force to serve the country. The duo has represented the RSP Kabaddi team in numerous prestigious tournaments besides the recently held Inter-district Kabaddi championship in which the team finished third amongst 30 teams of the state.

"If ever I represent India one day, the credit will definitely go to RSP," said Sumitra Munday, a 20 year old Kabaddi prodigy during a break from the training session. Sumitra, a tribal girl whose father works on a farm for a living and hails from Keman village in the neighboring Nuagaon Block, cycles every day to attend the camp.

It was at this camp in 2019 Sumitra's Kabaddi talent was first recognized. Under the guidance of RSP's coach, she honed her skills and later represented Odisha in the Senior National Kabaddi Championship-2023 held in Punjab.

"The camp is witnessing many such talents who are fighting all odds to chase their dreams," said Sukru Tanti, a Kabaddi coach who also works in the Structural & Fabrication Shop department of RSP. Tanti, a former national Kabaddi player, plays a crucial role in identifying hidden talents from rural areas and encouraging parental support for their children's sports careers. More than 70 youngsters are attending the Kabaddi camp.

Notably, the Summer Coaching Camp of RSP commenced on May 7, and will continue till May 27. More than 1,500 participants enrolled in the camp are learning the basics in 14 streams of sports.

utes much of her success to the camp. Millia Kujur wiped the dust off her jersey after a strenuous session in the camp to talk about her passion for the sport. "I thank RSP for organizing such a programme because of which I could live my dream."

Millia hails from a remote village of Balishankara Block. Both Sunita and Millia, who belong to marginal agrarian families, aspire not only to excel in Kabaddi, but also join the police force to serve the country. The duo has represented the RSP Kabaddi team in numerous prestigious tournaments besides the recently held Inter-district Kabaddi championship in which the team finished third amongst 30 teams of the state.

"If ever I represent India one



**POLL BOYCOTT:** Demanding construction of a bridge on Baski river, residents of Debasandhaguda village under Raisingh panchayat of Nandapur block in Koraput district threatened to boycott polls and put up fence barring entry for outsiders, Sunday

## Youth bludgeoned to death in Berhampur

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Digapahandi/Chikiti, May 12:** The K Nuagaon police Sunday recovered the body of a man who was allegedly bludgeoned to death by unidentified attackers at Narayanpur village of Bhramarapur panchayat under Digapahandi block in Ganjam district, Saturday night.

The mutilated body was recovered from the embankment of a canal adjacent to a road, police said while identifying the deceased as Milan Sahu, a resident of Deuliapada village of Chandapur panchayat under Chikiti block in the district. He owned a cargo autorickshaw.

According to reports, Saturday



evening Milan went to a place near Nuapada college in his cargo auto to take a bath. A security guard at the college said Milan spoke to him briefly before leaving the place on a bike with an unidentified person. His family members last spoke to him over phone at 10pm. However,

after sometime he went incommunicado, police said as quoting his family members.

Locals spotted the body Sunday morning and informed police.

K Nuagaon PS IIC, Kishore Kumar Samal along with a forensic team reached the spot and

launched an investigation into the incident.

The deep gashes on the head and face of the victim made the police suspect that he had been hit by some blunt object, causing his death.

Samal said preliminary investigation and circumstantial evidences points at a pre-planned murder. The body was sent to MKCG Medical College and Hospital at Berhampur for post-mortem after which it was handed over to the family members for performing the last rites.

Locals meanwhile, alleged that Milan was into gambling and he could have been done to death by fellow gamblers over some monetary disputes.

## Youth electrocuted while repairing fan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhuban, May 12:** A youth was electrocuted when he was repairing a table fan at his home in Shyamal village under this police limits of Dhenkanal district, Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Prakash Thatoi, a resident of Shyamal village.

According to reports, Prakash sustained electric shock while repairing a table fan. Hearing his screams, family members disconnected the power supply and rushed him to Bhuban hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead on arrival.

Family members of the deceased lodged a complaint in this regard at Bhuban police station and a case of unnatural death (No-08/2024) was registered. After post-mortem, police handed over the body to his family members. An investigation into the incident is underway police said.



## Campaign van driver held for stabbing garage owner

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, May 12:** A man was arrested and another detained in connection with the stabbing of a garage owner Saturday evening at Katalapasi village under Jhumpura police station limits in Keonjhar district, police said Sunday.

The arrested accused was identified as Kailash Chandra Mohanta, while his father has been detained by the police. The injured garage owner was identified as Dharanidhar Mohanta of Katalapasi village.

The main accused identified as Purenra Mohanta, the driver of the campaigning van is yet to be arrested. Sources said that Dharanidhar sustained critical injuries when the accused, Purenra, who drives a political party's campaigning van, stabbed him on his belly. The campaign vehicle was parked in front of Dharanidhar's garage at Katalapasi at around 7pm, Saturday.

A minor argument ensued between Dharanidhar and Purenra over parking the vehicle in front of the shop. It later escalated into a fight, following which Purenra called the vehicle owner Kailash and his father to the spot.



During the fracas Purenra suddenly stabbed Dharanidhar with a knife. In the meantime, locals overpowered Purenra and tied him to a pole before ransacking the vehicle. On being informed, police rushed to the spot and took an injured Dharanidhar and Purenra to the hospital.

The police later nabbed Kailash and his father from his residence and took them to police station for questioning. After interrogation Kailash was arrested while his father has been detained by the police.

Two cases were registered in this connection over separate complaints lodged in the police station. Purenra is yet to be arrested as he is undergoing treatment, said Sambari Hansda, IIC of Jhumpura police station. Further investigations are on.

## 3 critical among 6 hurt in bee attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mohana, May 12:** Six persons were injured, including three critically, after they came under attack by a swarm of tiger bees near Chhatabhari village under Mohana police limits in Gajapati district, Sunday.

Sources said four members of a family who were travelling in a car from Berhampur to Mohana stopped near Chhatabhari village to answer a call of nature. When they came out of the vehicle after parking it under a tree, a swarm of honey bees suddenly attacked them.

They ran back into the car for cover. However, the bees followed them into the vehicle and stung all those present inside. The angry bees didn't even spare some passersby who too received injuries in the attack.



All the injured persons were rescued and rushed to Mohana hospital for treatment. Later as the condition of three persons, who were critically injured, deteriorated they were shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital, said authorities at Mohana hospital. Their treatment was on when reports last came in.

## Rabindra Sangeet recital captivates Steel City audience

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 12:** A function for the recital of Rabindra Sangeet titled 'Umesh' to commemorate the 163rd birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was held at Bhanja Bhawan auditorium in Steel City, Sunday.

The audience was enthralled by the exhilarating performance of quality and sacredness of the concert and expressed their appreciation throughout the event. Similar performances were held across 11 states involving more than 1,100 artists who sang 20 choicest creations of the poet.

The performance involving non-stop singing of 20 poems by Tagore began at 11am and continued for an hour and forty minutes. The songs included one of Gurudev's most loved and famous numbers, 'Ekla Chalo Re'.

The programme was organised by Geetimalya, an organisation dedicated to music, es-



pecially Rabindra Sangeet. Earlier, Geetimalya used to perform in Kolkata, but this time it is organising the programme at all-India level. Susmita Naskar and Rakhi from Cuttack were the lead singers.

Speaking at the event, Susmita said live performance is a lifetime opportunity for all. "And this time,

105 artistes, all from Odisha, are participating in this chorus. As many as sixteen singers from Cuttack, five from Bhubaneswar and 84 from Rourkela are participating in this recital," she said.

Most of the artistes from Rourkela were Odias. Mana Chakraborty of Geetimalya said that Gurudev Rabindranath

Tagore and Rabindra Sangeet not only belong to Bengal or Bengalis but it is for all.

The audience enjoyed the performance with rapt attention. Bisu, a member from the audience, said that he loves the music and this was just another opportunity to enjoy the immortal creations of Gurudev. Sharmila,

another audience, said she enjoyed every bit of the performance. "The best part of Rabindra Sangeet lies in its simplicity," she said.

Koyena Dastidar, coordinator of the programme, said, "The performance is the result of over eight months of relentless practice which was really back-breaking. It is for that hard work that the artistes managed to perform at a certain level." She thanked Susmita for her untiring effort to train a mixture of trained and amateur artistes.

The practice sessions were held at various places in Rourkela, such as Civil Township, Basanti Colony, Koel Nagar.

The performance was held with no accompanist musicians and the artistes sang to the track. Similar performances were held in MP, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Kolkata, Assam, New Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana, and were live streamed on YouTube.

FOCUS RBI

# GOLD RESERVES SWELL



The RBI now has accumulated gold reserves of 817 tonnes. This surge can be attributed to a combination of factors including escalating tensions in West Asia, the Russia-Ukraine war, and persistent inflation, all of which have heightened the appeal of gold

In a strategic move reminiscent of Indian households safeguarding their wealth, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is fortifying the nation's economic resilience by actively acquiring gold reserves. This bold initiative mirrors the prudence of household savers, as the central bank positions itself to shield against potential economic turmoil and bolster the country's financial stability.

The RBI now has accumulated gold reserves of 817 tonnes. This surge can be attributed to a combination of factors including escalating tensions in West Asia, the Russia-Ukraine war, and persistent inflation, all of which have heightened the appeal of gold.

Central banks worldwide are actively accumulating gold to diversify reserves and reduce dependency on the US dollar. China, in particular, has been on a gold-buying spree for the 17th consecutive month, aiming to hedge against currency depreciation and geopolitical risks.

The world is unofficially going back to gold standards it abandoned in 1971.

India is also hit by a continuous six-day fall in the stock markets. This wiped out a significant investment. The loss is estimated at Rs 7 lakh crore. The household savers, of course, got their savings dipped as unemployment and rising prices hit them.

The RBI itself has stepped up gold purchases to "help diversify its foreign exchange reserves base amid the US dollar volatility." The US inflation rate in February hit 3.2 per cent year over year. Since the Federal Reserve began raising rates in 2022, it has raised rates to 5.5 per cent in July 2023. It's holding further raise in view of the US elections.

The price of gold has surged over 10 per cent since the start of the year, cementing its status as a preferred hedge against in-

flation and a sanctuary amid political and economic uncertainty. This significant uptick is largely due to considerable purchases by central banks and a rising demand for safe-haven assets.

Gold prices in India have been experiencing a significant surge in 2024, with a remarkable rally that has propelled them to an unprecedented all-time high of over Rs 73,000 per 10 gm two days before Akshay Tritiya, when customary gold purchases reach a peak. This surge represents an impressive increase of approximately 21.1 per cent within the span of just one year. On the day of Akshay Tritiya on 10 May, it slightly dipped to Rs 72,788. Over six months, domestic gold prices surged from Rs 54,000 per 10 grams to a record high of Rs 73,958.

One can realise that nothing can appreciate faster than gold and here one can't question the RBI's sagacity. One dollar is at Rs 83.88. Rupee is expected to rise to Rs 82.50 in six months, a gain of about a 1.1 per cent, and in a year it could rise to Rs 82 - a gain of 1.7 per cent. It means the RBI dollar reserves would lose

about 2 per cent value in a year. So, the RBI has decided to buy more gold than dollars. Its investment would be less at even Rs 73000 for 10 gm and gains over 20 per cent. That's an intelligent economy.

The RBI has increased gold purchases to diversify reserves, with gold value contributing to a \$3 billion rise in forex reserves of \$648.5 billion. The World Gold Council (WGC) says that RBI gold purchases touched 19 tonnes during January-March. This dwarfs the 16 tonnes of gold it bought in the whole of 2023.

In terms of countries with the highest gold reserves, USA leads with 8,133 tonnes, followed by Germany, Italy, France, and the Russian Federation with 3,366.49, 2,451.84, 2,436.01, and 2,271.16 tonnes of gold, respectively, according to WGC. The surge in central banks' gold acquisitions stemmed from the aftermath of the US imposition of sanctions on Russia. These sanctions, triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, included freezing Russian reserve dollars and imposing restrictions on crucial commodity trades such as crude oil. The global

repercussions of these measures were profound, exposing vulnerabilities within Western financial institutions.

The option of investments in the stocks has become riskier. In February, China divested an additional \$22.7 billion in US Treasury securities, as per the latest Federal Reserve data, reducing its total holdings to \$775 billion. Despite this decrease, China retains its position as the second-largest foreign holder of US debt. China is reducing its dependence on dollar, as per US Federal Reserve data.

According to an ICICI Direct study, the RBI wants to diversify its foreign exchange reserves and reduce dependence on the US dollar. Gold offers stability and isn't directly tied to the performance of any one currency. It can be especially valuable during times of economic uncertainty or fluctuations in the dollar's value. Gold is considered as a hedge against inflation. When the value of currencies weakens due to inflation, gold tends to hold its value or even increase. It protects the purchasing power of India's foreign reserves.

The diversification of the portfolio to gold reserve, RBI says, can inspire confidence in the Indian economy from foreign investors. It signals a strong financial position and stability, potentially attracting more foreign investment. While less common today, gold can still be used for international transactions. Holding a gold reserve allows India to settle debts with other countries if needed, even if those countries aren't willing to accept the rupee.

The next few years can be times of turmoil and gold can be a stabilising factor in the international economy. The RBI has resorted to the right move to lead India which has been striving to become one of the major world economies.

INFA



Shivaji Sarkar

THE NEXT FEW YEARS CAN BE TIMES OF TURMOIL AND GOLD CAN BE A STABILISING FACTOR IN THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY

## Unimportant Voter

A disconcerting new report has revealed that if business continues as usual on the front of carbon dioxide emissions, India among 13 countries could face the worst impacts of climate change in the times to come. Global risk intelligence firm Verisk Maplecroft, in its Climate Hazard Index, puts countries like India, Brazil, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Malaysia, the UAE, Vietnam, Egypt, Pakistan, Mexico, Australia and Iraq in the most-vulnerable category. These 13 countries are among the top 30 major emitters globally. Surprisingly, the world's biggest polluters, the US and China, may escape the very worst climate outcomes, according to the report.

Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like droughts and severe storms will have disastrous effects. However, it is predicted that the primary threat to economic activity and human life in these nations will be the rising heat levels, the report said. Climate data indicates that the 13 major emitters most vulnerable to climate change are expected to undergo a considerable increase in occurrences of extreme heat.

Besides, severe heat can significantly impede various forms of economic activity. This is especially evident when heat is coupled with high humidity in tropical areas or intense radiation in desert regions. The report underscores that these circumstances can create significant heat stress, posing a potential danger to individuals working in industries that require outdoor or poorly ventilated environments, like agriculture and construction.

In light of these scary predictions, one would assume India, as the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases and the most populous country, should be doing enough to allay the concerns.

Sadly, climate change is not yet a part of our political discourse and still remains confined to civil society groups or communities that are frequently bearing the brunt of extreme weather events. At the individual level, three out of five Indians perceive climate change as a threat to the country, according to data aggregated in 2019 and 2021 by Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll.

Erratic monsoons, desertification, flash floods, melting Himalayan glaciers, rising sea levels and severe heat waves are being felt across the country, yet, none of these issues are discussed at the political level. According to a survey conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the Centre for Voting Opinion & Trends in Election Research, between 1999 and 2019, only 0.3 per cent of questions raised by our politicians in the Parliament and state Assemblies were about climate change.

Unsurprisingly, the subject of climate change finds little or no mention in the recently released manifestoes of the parties contesting the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. Contrast this with Europe, which is witness to frequent climate protests by students and most recently by farmers, or Australia, where the last national elections were held primarily on the issue of climate change. In fact, it is difficult to imagine climate threat finding a place in our political narratives when religion, caste, legacy and such other polarising yet irrelevant topics have overshadowed even bread and butter issues that concern everyone.

Voters are primarily to be blamed for the current state of affairs wherein economic growth, keeping climate change in focus, has been completely removed from political agendas. All that we discuss today is limited to the number of seats a particular party and its leader can garner, who will the heir apparent be or what is being offered 'free' to seduce us, the voters, at this moment.

While skilling the youth is a process to prepare millions to become effective servants fit for 'jobs', we voters never bother to question who will be capable and how that capability will come about for a select few to employ large number of employees. The scenario is simple to understand. If your next generation gets skilled, she will expect a job cut out for her abilities. Some select few people would obviously have to be enabled to absorb these millions of servants and pay them salaries. Who will those few be and how will they be created to employ large numbers should be questions of prime importance.

The question must not stop simply at how India's target of achieving net zero emissions by 2070 will be achieved. More important is how well will our economy be woven, who has plans to offer and will those plans have the strength to withstand implementation. Keeping both economic growth for all and protecting Nature at the same time are issues where this nation's attention should be focussed.

Unfortunately, the voter has himself undermined and destroyed his own importance today. He stands reduced as an arithmetical digit only.



Piate

Iathagata Satpathy

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

## Don't fret about green subsidies



Dani Rodrik

GREEN INDUSTRIAL POLICIES ARE DOUBLY BENEFICIAL - BOTH TO STIMULATE THE NECESSARY TECHNOLOGICAL LEARNING AND TO SUBSTITUTE FOR CARBON PRICING

A trade war over clean technologies is brewing. The US and the European Union, worried that Chinese subsidies threaten their green industries, have warned that they will respond with import restrictions. China, in turn, has lodged a complaint at the World Trade Organization about discriminatory provisions against its products under US President Joe Biden's landmark climate legislation, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

On a recent trip to China, US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen warned China directly that the US would not stand by in the face of China's "large-scale government support" for industries such as solar, electric vehicles, and batteries. Reminding her audience that the US steel industry had previously been decimated by Chinese subsidies, she made clear the Biden administration's determination not to allow green industries to suffer the same fate.

China has scaled up its green industries with mind-boggling speed. It now produces nearly 80% of the world's solar PV modules, 60% of wind turbines, and 60% of electric vehicles and batteries. In 2023 alone, its solar-power capacity grew by more than the total installed capacity in the US. These investments were driven by a va-

riety of government policies at the national, provincial, and municipal levels, allowing Chinese firms to travel rapidly down the learning curve to dominate their respective markets.

The case for subsidising green industries, as China has done, is impeccable. Beyond the usual argument that new technologies provide know-how and other positive externalities, one also must account for the immeasurable costs of climate change and the huge prospective benefits of accelerating the green transition. Moreover, because the knowledge spillovers cross national borders, China's subsidies benefit not only consumers everywhere, but also other firms along the global supply chain.

Green industrial policies are doubly beneficial - both to stimulate the necessary technological learning and to substitute for carbon pricing. Western commentators who trot out scare words like "excess capacity," "subsidy wars," and "China trade shock 2.0" have gotten things exactly backwards. A glut in renewables and green products is precisely what the climate doctor ordered.

China's green industrial policies have been responsible for some of the most important wins to date against climate change. As Chinese producers expanded ca-

capacity and reaped the benefits of scale, the costs of renewable energy plummeted. In the space of a decade, prices fell by 80% for solar, 73% for offshore wind, 57% for onshore wind, and 80% for electric batteries. These gains underpin the creeping optimism in climate circles that we might just be able to keep global warming within reasonable bounds. Government incentives, private investment, and learning curves proved to be a very powerful combination indeed.

With the IRA, America already has its own version of China's green industrial policies. The law provides hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies to facilitate the transition to renewables and green industries. While some of the tax incentives do favour domestic producers over imports, these blemishes must be seen in the context of the political compromises needed to ensure the legislation's passage.

Countries have other interests besides the climate, of course. They can harbour legitimate concerns about the consequences of other countries' green industrial policies for jobs and innovative capacity at home. If they judge that these costs outweigh the climate and consumer benefits, they should be free to impose countervailing tariffs

on imports, as trade rules already allow. It would be better for the world overall if they didn't react that way, but nobody can or should stop them.

In fact, before globalisation and the tightening of trade rules went into overdrive in the 1990s, it was not uncommon for countries to negotiate informal arrangements with exporters as a way to moderate import surges and keep exporters reasonably happy. Recall the Multifiber Arrangement for garments in the 1970s, and the voluntary export restrictions for autos and steel in the 1980s. While economists decried these schemes as protectionist, such arrangements did little damage to the world economy. They essentially acted as safety valves: by allowing pressure to escape, they helped keep the trade peace.

What governments should not do is decry green industrial policies as norm violations or dangerous transgressions of international rules. The moral, environmental, and economic arguments favour those who subsidise their green industries, not those who want to tax others' production.

The writer is Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School. @PROJECTSYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

It takes considerable knowledge just to realize the extent of your own ignorance. THOMAS SOWELL

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves. CARL JUNG

The truth is something that burns. It burns off dead wood. And people don't like having the dead wood burnt off, often because they're 95 percent dead wood. JORDAN PETERSON

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1909: The Giro d'Italia cycle race is held for the first time. The Giro is considered one of the world's most important cycle races. Luigi Ganna won the first edition, which went from Milan to Naples and back.

1940: Igor Sikorsky pilots his VS-300 helicopter's maiden flight. The helicopter was the first successful model to use the single vertical tail rotor that most helicopters feature today.

1960: A Swiss expedition led by Max Eiselin reached the summit of Dhaulagiri in the Himalayas. Many of Dhaulagiri's snow- and glacier-covered peaks exceed 25,000 feet (7,620 metres), including Dhaulagiri I, II, III, and IV. The tallest, Dhaulagiri I, reaches an elevation of 26,795 feet (8,167 metres) and is the world's seventh highest mountain. The name of the peak is derived from two Sanskrit words meaning "white mountain."

1989: Thousands of students begin a hunger strike on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The non-violent occupation of the square was part of anti-corruption and pro-democracy demonstrations. Some 3000 unarmed civilians were killed when the army cracked down on the protesters on June 3-4, 1989.

## Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

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Geostrategic ambitions

Sir, Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent visit to Europe sparked discussions on trade, diplomatic relations, and geopolitical implications. The tour, spanning six days and including stops in Hungary and Serbia, aimed to address pressing issues such as the conflict in Ukraine and the deepening of economic ties. Despite efforts to foster closer understanding, achieving significant breakthroughs appeared challenging, mirroring the broader dynamics of global diplomacy between major powers. The visit underscored China's strategic interests in Eastern Europe, particularly evident in Hungary and Serbia. Both countries have embraced China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), signaling a willingness to deepen economic and infrastructural cooperation. The Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway project, a flagship initiative under the BRI, exemplifies China's geostrategic ambitions in the region, aiming to enhance connectivity and access to European markets. Xi's engagements in these countries reaffirmed China's commitment to expanding its influence in Europe, potentially unsettling traditional European alliances and testing the cohesion of the European Union. However, the tour also highlighted the complexities of China-EU relations amidst shifting geopolitical landscapes. While European leaders sought to address concerns regarding trade imbalances and market access, China's responses remained largely unchanged. Disputes over trade practices, including subsidies for electric vehicles and market restrictions, persisted, indicating enduring tensions in economic relations. Additionally, China's support for Russia in the conflict with Ukraine further strained relations, with European leaders urging China to leverage its influence to end the war.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

All razzmatazz

Sir, This refers to "Kejriwal's 'One nation, One leader' jibe at PM" (OrissaPOST, May 12). The Delhi Chief Minister's visit to the Hanuman temple in Connaught Place after his release from Tihar jail was full of razzmatazz. As Kejriwal could not play a victim card due to the court's instructions at the time of providing bail, he wisely opted to attack the Modi-Shah duo in an alternate way by bringing retirement rule set by PM Modi himself in the saffron party to the limelight. Leaders accusing their political rivals upon being incarcerated in any scam is a tad annoying. Instead they must focus on proving their innocence in the court. Vinayaka M, BANGALORE

# PDP & NC flag 'illegal arrests' of party workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, May 12:** A day ahead of voting for the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, the NC and the PDP sought the Election Commission's intervention Sunday to stop the alleged harassment and illegal arrest of the workers of the two parties. PDP candidate from Srinagar Waheed Para accused a senior IPS officer of trying to engineer a low voter turnout in areas where the party has a strong support base. In a letter to the EC, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said, "I am writing to you with a profound sense of urgency and grave concern regarding the troubling developments in the run-up to the elections in the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency scheduled for May 13."

detentions' violate the constitutional guarantee of participating in democracy and undermine the very essence of free-and-fair elections. "It is imperative that all political parties, including the Opposition, are afforded equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process, without the fear of harassment or intimidation. Therefore, I urge the Election Commission to take immediate and decisive action to address this grave matter. The impartiality and integrity of our democratic process must be safeguarded at all costs, and any actions that undermine these principles must be swiftly rectified," he added. Mufti pointed out that as the custodian of democracy, the EC plays a crucial role in upholding the integrity of the electoral process and ensuring a level-

"It has come to my attention that the state administration, under the control of the Union government, is shamelessly engaged in activities aimed at intimidating voters and supporters of the People's Democratic Party."

Referring to the 1987 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls, the former chief minister said it is distressing to witness history repeating itself, reminiscent of the 'rigged' election of 1987 that caused immense suffering and political disillusionment in the region.

Mufti said she is 'deeply troubled' by reports that the security agencies are conducting raids and harassing PDP workers in Pulwama and Shopian districts. "Numerous party members, sympathisers and activists have been arbitrarily detained without justification, apparently as punishment for their efforts to organise public rallies and encourage voter turnout. In a democratic society, it is imperative that both election authorities and state officials promote political participation and ensure a fair electoral process," she said in her letter to the poll panel.

In a similar letter to the EC, NC candidate Aga Ruhullah Mehdi listed out the names of the party workers who have been arrested since Saturday.

"I am writing to express my grave concern regarding the recent unlawful detention of several Jammu and Kashmir National Conference workers by the local police during the ongoing election period. This blatant infringement upon their fundamental rights of free movement and assembly not only violates the principles of democracy but also undermines the integrity of the electoral process," he said.

Mehdi said such 'arbitrary



playing field for all the contesting parties. "However, recent actions, such as the delay in (holding polls in) the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, have raised serious concerns about the commission's impartiality and emboldened those who seek to manipulate the electoral outcome through coercion and intimidation," the PDP leader's letter read. "The situation has escalated to a point where the security establishment is instilling a climate of fear in areas slated for elections on May 13. This appears to be a direct result of public threats made by the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party, which has openly called for the arrest of PDP supporters," it added.

Mufti said the imposition of Section 144 of the CrPC, prohibiting the assembly of people in areas witnessing high political activities, is 'shocking and deeply concerning'. "This arbitrary restriction stifles democratic participation and violates fundamental rights, solely based on anticipated political preferences. Citizens are being deprived of their right to express their democratic voice, simply because they are expected to support the PDP," she said.

## This is Gandhi's India, not Modi's: Farooq

AGENCIES

**Srinagar, May 12:** The BJP wants to divide Hindus and Muslims in the country, but they will not succeed "as this is MK Gandhi's India and not Narendra Modi's," National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah has said. "They want to divide Hindus and Muslims. But, Hindus and Muslims will not get divided. This is Gandhi's India and not Modi's India. This is Gandhi's, (Jawahar Lal) Nehru's and Rajendra Prasad's India," Abdullah told reporters in Chrar-e-Shareef in central Kashmir's Budgam district after an election rally.

Asked about his stand questioning the functioning of EVMs, Abdullah said, "I only told them (people) to check the light and beep on the machine, and if there is no sound, then inform the officials about it. I also told people to check the paper (VVPAT)."

Thursday, the NC president described EVMs as 'theft machines' and said if the Opposition INDIA bloc comes to power at the Centre, the EVMs "would be thrown into a river."

# School poised for 25 years celebrations out-of-bound for Kuki owners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal/Churachandpur, May 12:** Razed buildings and burnt furniture. These are what remain of the St. Peter's School in Manipur's Imphal after a year of violence in the state between Kuki and Meitei ethnic groups. "We were preparing to celebrate its silver jubilee year in 2023. But then the clashes broke out. They burnt everything," said principal Khupkhoman, a Kuki who has since moved to Churachandpur from the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley region.

Now an abandoned structure, the Manipur Board-affiliated St. Peter's School had more than 800 students till Class 10 pre-May 3, 2023, the day reports of incidents of clashes started pouring in from many parts of the northeastern state, prompting the closure of educational institutions, offices and businesses. "It's one day at a time for us. The situation remains unpredictable and we don't plan anymore. The crisis continues, and there is nothing to look forward to or look back upon,"

Khupkhoman, 62, who moved with her family to the hills of Churachandpur, said. The school, built by Khupkhoman and her late husband over 25 years, also had her residence on its premises. She now lives with her family in a rented accommodation, displaced like more than 60,000 others from both communities.

But Khupkhoman has not stopped calling families living around the school to take updates about her Meitei students, the Kukis have moved out. "They have joined other schools, some have dropped out," she told PTI. Recalling the preparations for the silver jubilee year celebrations, Khupkhoman said practice for dance and singing performances were underway. There was a lot of activity but then, within a night, it was all over, she said with tears in her eyes. The institution was attacked in the early hours of May 4 by a mob. "The school was everything we had, we had built it step by step, it was where we lived for years... Over 800 students had their hopes



attached with our vision and within a night everything was gone. At first, I had thought that this will be over in a week's time and I was already making plans about what all needs to be done before we resume classes again," Khupkhoman said. "Suddenly, I was left jobless,

homeless, hopeless...lost everything," she said. Unsure about the school's future, its management had moved the Supreme Court in November last year, seeking a direction to the Manipur government to compensate for the losses suffered and the state's failure to launch an in-

vestigation to arrest the perpetrators. "May 4 last year, the school, its buildings, its legacy and its mission were burnt, destroyed and lost forever. A day before, some families rushed to the school for safety when a violent mob began attacking churches, homes and other es-

tablishments of Kuki-Zo tribals," Khupkhoman's daughter-in-law Niangthianvung, 37, said. "By midnight, about 34 people were inside the school complex (to seek shelter). To make matters worse, electricity to the school and its nearby areas was cut off...a mob then entered the school complex and burnt down classrooms, offices, hostels and residences. The school's football turf was also set ablaze," she added. May 5 last year, Niangthianvung, took a flight to Guwahati in Assam with her two sons while Khupkhoman stayed in a relief camp for a week. Her husband, a banker, was in Hyderabad for training then. Later, they all travelled to Churachandpur using different routes, first living with relatives and then renting an accommodation for themselves. This PTI reporter visited the school in the Imphal Valley and the family in the hills of Churachandpur earlier this month. The two regions since May 3 last year stand divided with Kukis residing in the hills and Meiteis in the valley. Clashes have claimed more than 200 lives.



Tourists ride boats at Mansar Lake, near Jammu, Sunday.

PTI PHOTO

# LS polls: Multi-layered security blankets Srinagar

*In the first parliamentary polls since the abrogation of Article 370, nearly 17.48 lakh people in Kashmir's Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency will decide the fate of the 24 candidates trying their luck in the seat*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, May 12:** A foolproof security arrangement has been put in place for the polling in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency Monday, a senior police officer said.

In the first parliamentary polls since the abrogation of Article 370, nearly 17.48 lakh people in Kashmir's Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency will decide the fate of the 24 candidates trying their luck in the seat.

The voter turnout in the redrawn Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, following the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, will be keenly watched as most of the areas under the seat had previously witnessed low polling percentages due to boycott calls given by the separatists.

"We have made foolproof security arrangements as per the guidelines of the Election Commission in Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency where polling will be held tomorrow," Inspector



General of Police, Kashmir Zone, VK Birdi said.

He said arrangements have been made to provide a safe and secure environment so that the electorate can exercise their franchise in large numbers.

A multi-layer security blanket has been thrown around the polling stations as well as distribution centres and strong rooms across the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency which includes entire districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal, Pulwama and parts of Budgam and Shopian districts.

As many as 2,135 polling stations have been set up across Srinagar, Ganderbal, Pulwama and parts of Budgam and Shopian districts where polling will be held. Twenty-six special polling stations have been set

# 2,480 illegal immigrants detected before outbreak of violence: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, May 12:** Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh Sunday said 2,480 illegal immigrants were detected in the northeastern state in 2023 but the campaign was cut short after violence broke out May 3 last year.

Addressing a press conference Singh said concerned with increasing deforestation and setting up of new villages by illegal immigrants, a Cabinet sub-committee was formed in February 2023 after a cabinet meeting attended by two Kuki ministers Letpao Haokip and Nemcha Kippen.

Haokip was made the head of the sub-committee to identify illegal immigrants.

"We are not biased against anybody but against illegal immigrants. It was a decision taken by the state Cabinet," Singh said.

"Biometrics were taken in ten villages of Chandel during which 1,165 illegal immigrants were found, 1,147 illegal immigrants were found in 13 villages of Tengenpual district, 154 illegal immigrants in Churachandpur and rest were found in Kamjong district," Singh said.

These figures are not inclusive of the additional 5,457 illegal immigrants who entered Kamjong district, Singh said, adding biometrics of 5,173 people have been taken while 329 have returned back voluntarily after situation improved in the neighbouring country.

"The detection of illegal immigrants was not limited to one community but was to cover the entire state of Manipur. They



were found after visiting villages," Singh said.

"The campaign for identifying illegal immigrants was, however, cut short just after a month it started and had to be stopped after violence broke out May 3," Singh said.

Singh expressed strong disappointment with the Geneva-based International Court of Jurists (ICJ) which had recently ordered Indian authorities to stop deportation in Manipur.

Singh asked, "Does the organisation know the hardship faced by the indigenous population and issues of deforestation, demographic challenges and poppy cultivation caused by the illegal immigrants?"

"It is an irresponsible statement. Both the Centre and Manipur government are not under them. The deportations were also not forcible and no laws were broken. Myanmar authorities came to receive them after completing paper works and formalities" Singh said, adding, "NGOs which are focussed on earning funds should not interfere in the state issue as these are matters of survival for the indigenous people."

Singh lauded the acknowledgement made by the National Green Tribunal over the loss of forest areas in Manipur.



## BJP leaders shedding crocodile tears: Naveen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday accused BJP leaders of “spreading lies and shedding crocodile tears” ahead of elections.

Simultaneous elections to 21 Lok Sabha seats and 147 Assembly segments in the state will begin Monday and continue till the last phase, June 1.

The BJD supremo's remark came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in election rallies in the state Saturday, lashed out at Patnaik's government, accusing it of misrule and failing to develop the state during his 24-year rule.

Addressing an election rally in Kantabanji Assembly seat, from where he is contesting the elections, Patnaik said, “BJP leaders are shedding crocodile tears and spreading lies ahead of the polls.”

Patnaik asked the gathering, “Apana mane khushi ta?” (are you happy?), with the crowd re-



sponding with a “yes”. The chief minister made his speech in Odia after Modi accused him of not being able to

speak the language without a written note. Patnaik also sought feedback from people on different welfare

schemes implemented by his government. He addressed two rallies in Kantabanji Assembly segment in Bolangir Lok Sabha

## Chopper carries poll officials to Maoist-hit Sunabeda sanctuary



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada, May 12:** Polling parties were taken in a special helicopter for the booths set up inside the Maoist infested Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary in this district, Sunday.

Elections in Nuapada district will be held, today. According to reports, there are five polling booths - Sunabeda, Gatibeda, Deosil, Soseng and Jangaon - inside the Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary. The polling parties were despatched in groups in a special helicopter from Gotma airfield at Khariar Road in the district.

The polling parties will spend their night in the CRPF camps

in Sunabeda and Soseng, and will leave for their respective polling booths Monday morning under tight security. The polling parties underwent special training and the EVMs were verified thoroughly before leaving the district headquarters. District Collector and Election Officer Hemakant Soy and district officials supervised the entire operation.

There are 604 polling booths in Nuapada and Khariar Assembly constituencies. Polling officials have arrived for 282 booths in Khariar Assembly constituency Saturday while the polling parties for Nuapada Assembly constituency started arriving, Sunday.

## Steel City to witness big shows May 15

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 12:** Come May 15, the Steel City will witness mega events ahead of the big fight. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister (CM) Naveen Patnaik will descend in the City on that day to lead the campaigns for their respective party candidates.

The top leaders' visit has infused vigor among cadres of both BJP and BJD, here. Both sides are gearing up for the big occasion on the same day. Naveen is scheduled to address a gathering at Sector-13 Melana Ground during the first half of the day. Shah will be here in the later part of the day and address a meeting of BJP workers and supporters at the Aerodrome Field.

Notably, the CM will be coming to the City following the two-



day visit of 5T Chairman VK Pandian May 10 and 11. Prior to that, he participated in a massive roadshow to canvass for party MLA candidate Sarada Nayak and Lok Sabha nominee Dilip Tirkey. The next day, he addressed a huge gathering of supporters at Sector-2 Puja Ground.

BJP is in no mood to lag behind. In fact, party cadres and supporters are eagerly looking forward to the visit of Home

Minister Amit Shah which will certainly add some steam to the slow and uninspiring election campaign of the party here.

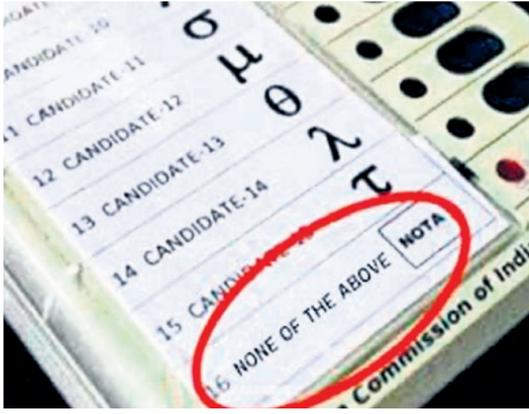
“The visits of the two top leaders in the aftermath of Pandian's visit will charge up the campaigning atmosphere in the City here as well as the twin Assembly segments of Rourkela and Raghunathpalli,” said local sipping tea at a road-side stall.

Another patron observed, “It

seems CM's visit will overshadow that of the Union Home Minister.” He said only Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit could have overshadowed the CM's presence. “After all, elections are also about perception and showcasing one's influence,” he added.

So far, scorching heat wave conditions and rise in humidity level have made life miserable here for all. As a result, campaigning has mostly been confined to smaller meetings, personal interactions, and those would be wrapped up by 11am. Only after 5pm, people would come out of their homes or offices. “For the first time I am witnessing no posters, banners or blaring of noisy PA systems. Though we are in the middle of the elections, there are hardly any big rallies either by foot or on cycles/bikes,” said a senior citizen.

## ‘NOTA could be effective only if more than 50% voters opt for it’



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Indore, May 12:** Former Chief Election Commissioner OP Rawat Sunday described 'NOTA' as having a 'symbolic' impact and said if it gets more than 50 per cent votes in a seat, only then a thought could be given to make it legally effective on poll results.

Rawat, a former IAS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre, also told PTI that if one out of 99 out of 100 votes go in favour of None of the Above (NOTA) option and a candidate gets one vote, even then he/she will emerge victorious.

The Congress received a jolt in Madhya Pradesh's Indore Lok Sabha seat after its candidate Akshay Kanti Bam withdrew his nomination April 29, the last

date for the withdrawal of nominations.

Bam later joined the BJP, prompting the Congress to appeal to the people to press the NOTA option on EVMs during polling in Indore May 13 to teach the “saffron party a lesson”.

The Congress is out of the electoral race for the first time in the 72-year history of the Indore Lok Sabha seat.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Indore recorded 69 per cent turnout with 5,045 voters opting for NOTA.

Rawat said, “In the present situation, NOTA has only symbolic significance and it cannot have an impact on the election result of any seat.”

“In an election, if 99 votes out of 100 go to NOTA and a candidate gets only one vote, still the

candidate, and not NOTA, will be declared the winner,” he said.

The former CEC said if more than 50 per cent of the voters in a seat favour NOTA, only then there is a point in thinking of making this voting option legally effective on the election results.

“More than 50 per cent electors will have to once opt for NOTA in a seat to show the political community that they do not consider candidates with criminal background or other undeserving ones worthy of their votes. Only after this, pressure on Parliament and the Election Commission will increase and they will have to think about changing laws to make NOTA effective on the election results,” he said. The 'NOTA' button was introduced on the electronic voting machines in September 2013 following the Supreme Court's decision. It was added to the voting options to discourage parties from fielding tainted candidates.

Anil Verma, head of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an electoral reform advocacy group, said that in the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections, NOTA got an average of less than two per cent votes.

“To take the NOTA option to the next level, it should be made legally powerful. We believe that if NOTA gets more votes than polled by the candidates in any seat, then the election should be cancelled and a fresh poll should be conducted with new candidates,” he said.

## Candidates trying to woo Bengali settlers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Koraput, May 12:** The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD), BJP and Congress candidates in Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat are trying to woo the Bengali migrant settlers as their votes can sway the electoral fortune in the constituency.

The Bengali community largely comprises people belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) who migrated from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) during the 1960s and 1970s and settled in 214 villages in Malkangiri district and 64 villages in Nabarangpur district after acquiring Indian citizenship in the early 1970s.

Elections to the Nabarangpur constituency will be held May 13.

Comprising around 1.5 lakh voters, the Bengali community exerts considerable influence across the Nabarangpur parliamentary constituency, encompassing four Assembly segments of Nabarangpur district, two in Malkangiri district, and one of Koraput district.

With their votes significantly impacting electoral dynamics, political parties are earnestly striving to secure their allegiance.

BJD candidate Pradeep Majhi said, “The state government has done a lot for the development of the Bengali settlers in the past five years. As the majority of

### NABARANGPUR LS SEAT



Bengali settlers of Malkangiri are farmers, they have been provided with irrigation facilities and infrastructure has been strengthened in the villages dominated by Bengalis.”

“Last time, the Bengali voters had chosen the BJD and I am confident that this time too they will vote for us,” he added.

However, expressing confidence that the Bengali settlers will back the saffron party, BJP candidate Balabhadra Majhi said, “The Bengalis want to see Modi as Prime Minister and for this, they will vote for the BJP for their all-round development.”

Not remaining far behind in wooing Bengali settlers, Congress candidate Bhujabal Majhi said, “The Bengali voters are intelligent voters and we trust their astuteness to make informed choices.”

Assam Chief Minister Himant

Biswa Sarma May 9 campaigned in Malkangiri district for the BJP candidate wooing Bengalis to provide Bengali language teachers in schools and renaming their villages.

Sarma delivered his speech mostly in Bengali and exhorted them to cast their votes for the lotus symbol.

“Support of the Bengali voters is very important for any tribal candidate aspiring to win the election. Undoubtedly, the Bengali diktat will prevail in the Nabarangpur constituency,” said Ram Patnaik, a political analyst in Malkangiri.

Traditionally, the BJP enjoyed the backing of Bengali settlers. However, the landscape appears to be shifting, with the ruling BJD making inroads into Bengali villages, potentially denting previous loyalties.

Ashok Halder, president of

the Matua community of the Bengali settlers highlights the changing dynamics, emphasising the BJD's proactive stance in addressing community concerns since 2022.

This shift in allegiance manifested in the 2022 rural polls when the BJD made significant gains - from one Zilla Parishad seat in 2017 to winning 12 out of the 15 Zilla Parishad seats in 2022. “In the rural polls of 2022, we supported the BJD and the party has always been by our side,” said Halder, a resident of MV-72 village.

Halder's sentiment finds echo in many Bengali settlers, disillusioned by previous political neglect. Despite their discerning approach to candidate selection, the Matua community, comprising around 30,000 voters, leans towards the BJD.

However, unresolved grievances linger within the Bengali community.

Sapan Kirtania, patron of Malkangiri Bengali Samaj, articulates community demands, including the recognition of revenue villages, inclusion of Bengali language in school curricula, and also availability of land for families who returned from Sundarbans in West Bengal.

“Bengali voters will cast vote according to their choice and keep an eye on the political landscape,” said Kirtania.



BJD Lok Sabha nominee Lekhashree Samantsinghar attending an election-cum-merger meeting at Nachimpur panchayat in Jaleswar of Balasore district, Sunday



Congress leaders address party workers at a meeting in Athamallik of Angul district, Sunday



BJP leaders participate in 'Nari Shakti Vandan Samavesh' at Chinamalipasi Hata ground under Patana block in Keonjhar district, Sunday



People are contacting Samajwadi Party workers and our 'Babasaheb Vahini' across the state and extending their support  
AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

## BADRINATH TEMPLE OPENS FOR DEVOTEES

The doors of the Badrinath temple in the Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand opened for devotees Sunday after remaining closed during the winter season. With the opening of the shrine, the Chardham Yatra to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri and Gangotri has started



## of the day quote

A new government will come to power at the Centre in June. There is no need to wait till September 2025  
SHASHI THAROOR | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

The PM is still peddling lies about Sandeshkhali. He should be ashamed as the BJP's conspiracy has now become public  
MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

Mother is a feeling beyond words -- of affection, sacrifice, patience and strength. Today, on the auspicious occasion of Mother's Day, I salute all motherly power  
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

# India highlights forest conservation success at UN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICES

New Delhi, May 12: India informed the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) that it has made significant advancements in forest conservation and management, leading to a consistent increase in forest cover over the past 15 years. The country participated in the 19th Session of the UNFF held at the UN headquarters in New York from May 6 to 10. Globally, India ranks third in the net gain in average annual forest area between 2010 and 2020. During the session, India said it gives high priority to biodiversity and wildlife conservation, having expanded the network of protected areas to over

a thousand wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, biosphere reserves, and other wildlife habitats. The recent celebrations marking 50 years of 'Project Tiger' and 30 years of 'Project Elephant' underscore India's commitment to species conservation and habitat protection, the environment ministry said in a statement. India also highlighted the creation of the International Big Cat Alliance, a global initiative aimed at protecting and conserving the seven big cat species worldwide through collaborative efforts. The country also informed the UNFF about the introduction of the 'Green Credit Program', a market-based mechanism rewarding voluntary en-



India participated in the 19th Session of the UNFF held at the UN headquarters in New York from May 6 to 10

Globally, India ranks third in the net gain in average annual forest area between 2010 and 2020

vironmental actions by individuals, communities, and the private sector. Previously, in October 2023, India hosted the Country Led Initiative under UNFF in

Dehradun, attended by representatives from 40 countries and 20 international organisations, focusing on forest fire management and forest certification. The recommendations from this

## SANDESHKHALI VIOLENCE

# TMC moves EC against NCW chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 12: The Trinamool Congress Sunday lodged a complaint with the EC against National Commission for Women Chairperson Rekha Sharma, accusing her of being "one of the major conspirators" of incidents in Sandeshkhali where allegations of sexual abuse against leaders of the ruling party in West Bengal have been made.

In a letter to the Election Commission, the TMC said it was filing a complaint against Sharma and a BJP leader for "commission of serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy upon innocent women of Sandeshkhali and the entire electorate in general".

"This is to draw your urgent attention to a deeply distressing turn of events, wherein, BJP leaders along with member(s) of the NCW have criminally conspired against the entire electorate and hence, warrants your immediate intervention," the party said in the letter to EC.

The TMC also said, "An interview of a woman from Sandeshkhali was shared on X platform May 10 which reveals that Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of NCW along with members/leaders of the BJP, including Piyali Das - a BJP member from Sandeshkhali - have committed serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy by exposing innocent women of Sandeshkhali for political gains."

The TMC lodged the complaint after the party shared purported videos in which a woman was heard saying, "we were deceived in signing on blank papers. We discovered later that rape complaints had been lodged in our names. This is a blatant lie".

The videos surfaced days after another clipping became viral, which showed a local functionary of the party in Sandeshkhali claiming that the leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly Suvendu Adhikari was behind the episode.

## Money laundering case: ED summons J'khand minister Alamgir Alam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, May 12: The Enforcement Directorate has summoned Jharkhand Rural Development Minister and Congress leader Alamgir Alam for questioning in a money laundering case May 14, official sources said Sunday.

The federal agency had last week arrested Alam's personal secretary and state administrative service officer Sanjeev Kumar Lal (52) and the latter's domestic help Jahangir Alam (42), following the seizure of more than ₹32 crore cash from a flat linked to them.

Alam, 70, has been asked to depose at the zonal office of the ED in Ranchi Tuesday for recording his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

The money laundering investigation pertains to alleged irregularities and payment of "bribes" in the state rural development department.

Reacting to the development, the minister told reporters in his assembly constituency Pakur that he may depose before the ED if he is able to collect the documents that he is required to furnish to the agency and if he is not able to do so, he will "seek more time" from the ED.

He said that people have known him for 25-30 years now and his image is "not that of a corrupt person".

He claimed that the allegations have been levelled against him to "malign" his image.

"As a minister of the department (rural development), the ED can question me... people know what is happening and they will give their response when the time comes," Alamgir Alam said.

The ED had informed a special PMLA court here, while seeking the remand of the two arrested persons, that Lal collected "commission" on behalf of some influential people and government officials from "top to bottom" in the rural department are involved in the alleged illegal cash payments nexus.

The total seizure of cash by the ED in this case has been recorded at around ₹36.75 crore as the agency seized about ₹3 crore from other locations including ₹10.05 lakh from Lal's place apart from ₹1.5 crore cash from a contractor's place last Tuesday.

# VOTING ON 96 SEATS TODAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amravati/Lucknow, May 12: The electoral fate of several prominent candidates like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Union minister Giriraj Singh, TMC's firebrand leader Mohua Moitra and AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi will be decided Monday when polling will be held in 96 Lok Sabha constituencies across 10 states and Union Territories in the fourth phase of the general elections.

Voting will simultaneously be held in all 175 Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh, which is witnessing a triangular contest involving ruling YSRC, the Congress-led

INDIA bloc and the NDA, comprising the BJP, Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP and Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP). As many as 28 legislative assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this phase.

A total of 1,717 candidates are in the fray in the Lok Sabha seats and more than 19 lakh polling officials have been deployed at 1.92 lakh polling stations for the over 17.70 crore eligible voters, including 8.73 women, in this round of the seven-phase



polls. Among the keenly watched contests are those involving former Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister Akhilesh Yadav (Kannauj, UP) and Union ministers Giriraj Singh (Begusarai, Bihar), Nityanand Rai (Ujjainpur, Bihar) and Raosaheb Danve (Jalna, Maharashtra).

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and former cricketer Yusuf Pathan of TMC (both from Baharampur, WB), BJP's Pankaja Munde (Beeed, Maharashtra), AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi (Hyderabad, Telangana) and Andhra Pradesh Congress president YS Sharmila (Kadapa) are among the prominent candidates. Union Minister Ajay Kumar Mishra Teni, whose son is an accused in the 2021

Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, is eyeing a hat-trick from Kheri (UP), while TMC's Mahua Moitra, who was expelled from Lok Sabha in the wake of cash-for-query allegations, is seeking re-election from Krishnanagar in West Bengal.

Film star-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha is seeking re-election from Asansol where he is pitted against BJP's veteran leader S S Ahluwalia. BJP's former West Bengal president Dilip Ghosh and Trinamool Congress' Kirti Azad are contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur.

So far, till phase three of the Lok Sabha elections, polling has concluded in 283 seats out of 543.

Polling will be held Monday in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand,

## SHORT TAKES

### YouTuber 'Savukku' Shankar detained

Chennai: Noted YouTuber 'Savukku' Shankar, currently lodged in the Coimbatore Central prison, was Sunday detained under the Goondas Act. Based on the orders of Commissioner of Police, Greater Chennai, Sandeep Rai Rathore, the detention order under the Goondas Act was served on Shankar by a cyber crime (Chennai) police inspector May 12, Chennai city police said.

### Boy dies of food poisoning

Pilibhit (UP): 12-year-old boy died of "food poisoning" and five people of his family here were taken ill with local residents alleging they had consumed some noodles. The food department officials, however refuted the claim. According to locals, six members of a family, including three children, in Purnapur area fell ill after having noodles and rice Thursday night.

### Four killed in MP road mishap

Jhabua (MP): Four persons were killed after a sports utility vehicle (SUV) hit two motorcycles in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district, bordering Gujarat, police said Sunday. The incident took place near Kundanpur village under Ranapur police station limit, some 20 km from the district headquarters, Saturday night, an official said.

### Shah visits rebel SP MLA's house

Raebareilly (UP): Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the residence of rebel SP MLA Manoj Pandey after addressing a rally here Sunday. He was accompanied by BJP candidate Dinesh Pratap Singh. The Union Home Minister held a closed-door meeting with Pandey and the BJP candidate and made an effort to resolve differences between the two.

### Top court to hear Kejri's plea today

New Delhi: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Monday a plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal challenging a Delhi High Court order upholding the summons issued to him in a criminal defamation case for retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTuber Dhruv Rathee in May 2018. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta is likely to hear the matter in which Kejriwal has admitted that he "committed a mistake" by retweeting the alleged defamatory video. The top court March 11 asked Kejriwal whether he wanted to give an apology to the complainant in the matter.

## LOK SABHA ELECTIONS PHASE 4



Commuters move past during rainfall in Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka

# 89% Indian mothers concerned about kids' screen time

THE REPORT, RELEASED BY MARKET RESEARCH FIRM TECHARC ON MOTHER'S DAY, IS BASED ON A SURVEY OF 600 WORKING MOTHERS, ACROSS FOUR METRO CITIES, HAVING AT LEAST ONE CHILD BETWEEN GRADE 3-10 IN SCHOOL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 12: A whopping 89 per cent of Indian mothers are concerned about the screen time of their children, according to a report Sunday.

The report, released by market research firm Techarc on Mother's Day, is based on a survey of 600 working mothers, across four metro cities, having at least one child between grade 3-10 in school.

It explores insights on the digital ecosystem in which mothers operate today viz-a-viz the chal-

lenges, concerns, interests, and preferences.

"Mothers believe that increased screen time affects their studies and has a negative impact on the mental and physical health of their children," the report said.

Further, the report showed that privacy (81 per cent), inappropriate content (72 per cent), teenage influencers (45 per cent), deep fakes, and impersonation (26 per cent) were other top concerns bothering mothers.

Mothers feel that deep fakes and Gen AI will add to their future parenting worries as they



get to see the rising cases along with learning how these can be negatively used to malign the reputation and credibility of individuals.

Among the devices, mothers are concerned about the expected popularity of VR headsets, especially after the launch of Apple Vision Pro.

Mothers believe that "this form factor will zone out their children who will lose attentiveness towards the environment adding to their distractions," the report said.

On the other hand, mothers

also found the digital world much more useful and relevant for children, compared to five years ago.

More than 60 per cent of the mothers spent 51-85 per cent on their children through digital mediums buying various goods and services. Nearly 20 per cent of digital savvy mothers spent more than 85 per cent, the report said.

Mothers' most trusted digital partners include Amazon (for shopping), Swiggy (for food), and Disney Hotstar (for entertainment).

# international



This is an America-first foreign policy in action: American strength, presidential leadership, peace through strength, and working with allies with the caveat that the United States will sometimes act independently when it is in our nation's interest  
MORGAN ORTAGUS | FORMER SPOKESPERSON FOR THE US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

## QUAKE WAKES PEOPLE

A strong earthquake shook the border of Mexico and Guatemala early Sunday, driving frightened residents into the streets. The temblor struck just before 6 am near the Mexican border town of Suchiate



## of the day quote

People think that if they come in the tax net, they will be harassed for no reason [however, that's not the case as] we will provide facilities, negotiate but will not go back from the track  
MUHAMMAD AURANGZEB | PAKISTAN FINANCE MINISTER

We have maintained strict financial discipline while taking unpopular decisions to facilitate economic recovery  
RANJITH SIYAMBALAPITIYA | MINISTER OF FINANCE OF SRI LANKA

A mission team led by Nathan Porter, IMF's mission chief to Pakistan, will meet with authorities next week to discuss the next phase of engagement  
ESTHER PEREZ RUIZ | IMF'S RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE FOR PAKISTAN

# FLOOD MAYHEM



AGENCIES

**Padang (Indonesia), May 12:** Heavy rains and torrents of cold lava and mud flowing down a volcano's slopes on Indonesia's Sumatra island triggered flash floods that killed at least 37 people and more than a dozen others were missing, officials said Sunday.

Monsoon rains and a major mudslide from a cold lava flow on Mount Marapi caused a river to breach its banks and tear through mountainside villages in four districts in West Sumatra province just before midnight Saturday. The floods swept away people and submerged more than 100 houses and buildings, National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said.

Cold lava, also known as lahar, is a mixture of volcanic material and pebbles that flow down a volcano's slopes in the rain.

By Sunday afternoon, rescuers had pulled out 19 bodies in the worst-hit village of Canduang in Agam district and recovered nine other bodies in the neighboring district of Tanah Datar, the National Search and Rescue Agency said in a statement.

The agency said that eight bodies were pulled from mud during deadly flash floods that also hit Padang Pariaman, and one body was found in the city of Padang Panjang. It said rescuers are searching for 18 people who are reportedly missing. Flash floods Saturday night also caused main roads around the



People clean up the area in the aftermath of floods following heavy rain, in Sheikh Jalal District, Baghlan province, Afghanistan  
REUTERS

## 315 KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN

**Nahrin:** Flash floods caused by heavy rains have devastated villages in northern Afghanistan, killing 315 people and injuring more than 1,600, authorities said Sunday, as villagers buried their dead and aid agencies warned of widening havoc. Thousands of homes were damaged and livestock wiped out, the Taliban-run refugee ministry said, while aid groups warned of damage to health care facilities and vital infrastructure, such as water supply, with streets left coated in mud. In the Nahrin district of Baghlan province, people carried their shrouded dead to a gravesite.

## Brazil reeling under catastrophic floods

**Rio de Janeiro:** The death toll from heavy rains in Brazil's Rio Grande do Sul state rose to 143, the local civil defense government body said Sunday, up from 136 in the previous day, while another 125 people remain unaccounted for. The government Saturday evening announced around 12.1 billion reais (\$2.34 billion) in emergency spending to deal with the crisis that has displaced more than 5.37 million people in the state, out of a population of around 10.9 million. With this new money, more than 60 billion reais in federal funds has already been made available to the state, said the federal government in a statement Saturday. The state is at a geographical meeting point between tropical and polar atmospheres, which has created a weather pattern with periods of intense rains or drought.

Anai Valley Waterfall area in Tanah Datar district to be blocked by mud, cutting off access to other cities, Padang Panjang Police Chief Kartayana Putra said Sunday.

Videos released by the National Search and Rescue Agency showed roads that were transformed into murky brown rivers.

The disaster came just two months after heavy rains triggered flash floods and a landslide

in West Sumatra's Pesisir Selatan and Padang Pariaman districts, killing at least 21 people and leaving five others missing.

The 2,885-metre (9,465-foot) Mount Marapi erupted late last year killing 23 climbers who were caught by a surprise week-end eruption. The volcano has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, indicating above-normal volcanic

activity under which climbers and villagers must stay more than 3 km (about 2 miles) from the peak, according to Indonesia's Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation.

Marapi is known for sudden eruptions that are difficult to predict because the source is shallow and near the peak, and its eruptions aren't caused by a deep movement of magma, which sets off tremors that register on seismic monitors.

Marapi has been active since an eruption in January 2023 that caused no casualties. It is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia. The country is prone to seismic upheaval because of its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin.

## SHORT TAKES

### Ohio police officer killed

**Euclid (Ohio):** An Ohio police officer was shot and killed after being "ambushed" while answering a disturbance call over the weekend, and a suspect was being sought, authorities said Sunday. Police in the Cleveland suburb of Euclid said officers were dispatched just before 10 pm Saturday to a home due to a reported disturbance.

### Four TTP militants killed

**Lahore:** Four militants, including a "target killer", of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed by security forces in Punjab province, police said Sunday. The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab province arrested TTP "target killer" Faizan Ahmad Butt last week in connection with the killing of policemen in Lahore in April, a CTD spokesperson said.

### Massive fire broke out in Warsaw

**Warsaw:** A fire broke out Sunday morning in a vast shopping centre housing 1,400 shops and service outlets in the Bialoleka district in Poland's capital. The fire brigade said more than 80 per cent of The Marywilka 44 shopping complex was on fire, and 50 teams, including chemical and environmental rescue specialists, were carrying out rescue operations.

### Catalans vote

**Barcelona:** More than 5.7 million voters in Catalonia are eligible to participate in a regional election Sunday whose outcome will reverberate in Spain's national politics. The ballot will be a test both for the strength of the separatist movement in the wealthy northeastern part of Spain and for the policies of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

## NIJJAR KILLING CASE 4th Indian held in Canada for suspected role

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington/Ottawa, May 12:** A fourth Indian national has been arrested by Canadian authorities in connection with the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in this country, a week after police arrested three Indians linked with the high-profile case that has severely strained India's relations with Canada.

Amandeep Singh, 22, a resident of Brampton, Surrey, and Abbotsford areas of Canada, has been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia June 18, 2023.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said that Singh was arrested May 11 for his role in the killing of Nijjar. He was already in the custody of the Peel Regional Police for unrelated firearms charges, the release said.

"This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," said Superintendent Mandeep Mooker, the Officer in Charge of IHIT.

"IHIT pursued the evidence and gained sufficient information for the British Columbia Prosecution Service to charge Amandeep Singh with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder," the police statement said.



Investigators said no further details of the arrest can be released due to ongoing investigations and court processes.

IHIT investigators May 3 arrested three Indian nationals - Karan Brar (22), Kamalpreet Singh (22) and 28-year-old Karanpreet Singh - for the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

All three individuals are Indian nationals living in Edmonton and have been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar. India has dismissed Trudeau's charges as "absurd" and "motivated."

Nijjar was a Khalistani separatist and he was wanted in India on various terror charges.

## SNIPPETS

### Over 100 injured as clashes rock PoK

**Islamabad:** One police officer was killed and more than 100 people, mostly policemen, injured in violent clashes between security forces and protesters agitating against high prices of wheat flour and electricity in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, media reports said Sunday. The disputed region witnessed clashes Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement amid a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the territory, the Dawn newspaper reported.

### Thousands escape wildfire in Canada

**Vancouver:** Canadian authorities are urging all remaining residents in a town in British Columbia to leave immediately, despite improving weather conditions, after many were already evacuated due to a fast-growing wildfire. The blaze, which started Friday, almost doubled in size the following day, reaching about 17 square kilometers (4,200 acres). BC Wildfire Service maps showed the fire burning just a few kilometers (miles) west of Fort Nelson's city limits.

## 7 killed in Ukrainian missile strike on Russian apartment block

REUTERS

**Moscow, May 12:** At least seven people were killed and 17 injured when a whole section of a Russian apartment block collapsed after it was struck by a Soviet-era missile launched by Ukraine and shot down by Russia, Russian officials said.

In one of the deadliest attacks to date on the region of Belgorod, Ukraine launched what Russian officials said was a massive missile attack with Tochka ballistic missiles and Adler and RM-70 Vampire (MLRS) multiple launch rocket systems.

Footage from the scene showed at least 10 storeys of the building collapsing. Later, as emergency services scoured the rubble for survivors, the roof collapsed and people ran for



their lives, dust and rubble falling behind them. Russia's defence ministry said the attack, which it called a "terrorist attack on residential areas", took place at 08:40 GMT and involved at least 12 missiles. "Fragments of one of the downed Tochka-U missiles damaged an apartment building in the city of Belgorod," the ministry said.

Russian news agencies said at least seven people had been killed and 17 injured, including two children. Others were still trapped under the rubble.

## Pilots incapable of flying aircraft donated by India: Maldives Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Male, May 12:** The Maldives military still does not have pilots capable of operating three aircraft donated by India, Defence Minister Ghassan Maumoon has acknowledged, days after 76 Indian defence personnel left the island nation at the instance of Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu.

Ghassan made the remarks at a press conference held at the President's Office here Saturday to brief the media about the withdrawal of Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives to operate two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft and their replacement with civilians from India.

Responding to a question from a journalist, Ghassan said there were no Maldivian soldiers with the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) who can operate the three aircraft donated by the Indian military despite some soldiers who began training to fly them under agreements formed by previous governments.

"As it was a training that required passing various stages, our soldiers had not reached completion due to various reasons. Therefore, there aren't any people in our force at the moment who are licensed or fully operational to fly the two helicopters and Dornier aircraft," Ghassan was quoted as saying by Adhadhu.com news portal.

# US aims to stay ahead of China in using AI

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, May 12:** Two Air Force fighter jets recently squared off in a dogfight in California. One was flown by a pilot. The other wasn't.

That second jet was piloted by artificial intelligence, with the Air Force's highest-ranking civilian riding along in the front seat.

It was the ultimate display of how far the Air Force has come in developing a technol-

ogy with its roots in the 1950s. But it's only a hint of the technology yet to come.

The United States is competing to stay ahead of China on AI and its use in weapon systems.

The focus on AI has generated public concern that future wars will be fought by machines that select and strike targets without direct human intervention.

Officials say this will never happen, at least not on the US side. But there are questions



about what a potential adversary would allow, and the military sees no alternative but to get US capabilities fielded fast.

"Whether you want to call it a race or not, it certainly is," said Adm. Christopher Grady, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"Both of us have recognised that this will be a very critical element of the future battlefield. China's working on it as hard as we are."

A look at the history of mil-

itary development of AI, what technologies are on the horizon and how they will be kept under control:

### FROM MACHINE LEARNING TO AUTONOMY

AI's roots in the military are actually a hybrid of machine learning and autonomy. Machine learning occurs when a computer analyses data and rule sets to reach conclusions. Autonomy occurs when those conclusions are applied to take action without further

human input.

This took an early form in the 1960s and 1970s with the development of the Navy's Aegis missile defence system. Aegis was trained through a series of human-programmed if/then rule sets to be able to detect and intercept incoming missiles autonomously, and more rapidly than a human could. But the Aegis system was not designed to learn from its decisions and its reactions were limited to the rule set it had.

## of the day quote

The government has set an ambitious target to achieve \$100 billion export for textile products by 2030. We will accord focused attention to promote India's textiles exports

**RACHNA SHAH** | TEXTILES SECRETARY

FY24 has been a phenomenal year for the Indian residential segment, with record sales and new launches across the top 7 cities

**SANTHOSH KUMAR** | VICE CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

So CNG, this year, we did about 4,50,000 (units) in passenger vehicles. We are hoping to do something like 6,00,000 vehicles in FY24-25

**RAHUL BHARTI** | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS, MARUTI SUZUKI

## SHORT TAKES

### Coal import rises

**New Delhi:** India's coal import rose by 7.7 per cent to 268.24 million tonne (MT) in FY24 driven by softness in seaborne prices and likelihood of increase in power demand during summer. The country's coal import was 249.06 MT in FY23, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services. Coal import in March FY24 also rose to 23.96 MT, over 21.12 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal. Of the total volume recorded in March 2024, non-coking coal import stood at 15.33 MT, against 13.88 MT in March FY23. Coking coal import in March 2024 was 5.34 MT against 3.96 MT a year ago.

### Adani Ent's capex

**New Delhi:** Adani Enterprises, billionaire Gautam Adani-led group's flagship firm that has interests spanning from new energy to airports and data centres, plans to spend ₹80,000 crore across businesses in the current financial year, a senior company executive said. A bulk of the capital expenditure planned for 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) fiscal will be on new energy businesses and airports, said Saurabh Shah, deputy chief financial officer, at an analyst call, transcript of which was released by the company. "We are looking at a capex of about ₹80,000 crore in FY25, out of which a major part...will go in ANIL and airports business which take up about ₹50,000 crore of capex," he said. ANIL is Adani New Industries Ltd which makes solar modules that convert sunlight into electricity, and green hydrogen.

## India's oldest women billionaire

Subbamma Jasti marked her debut on the Forbes list when her net worth touched \$1.1bn

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 12:** Subbamma Jasti has become India's oldest women billionaire, as per the real-time billionaires' list by Forbes. Jasti marked her debut on the Forbes list last month when her net worth touched \$1.1 billion.

Subbamma Jasti, 91, is the mother of Venkateswarulu Jasti, who co-founded Suvon Pharmaceuticals in 1989. She lives in Hyderabad. Her son used to run a chain of six community pharmacies in the state of New Jersey and New Jersey in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. The biggest chunk of Jasti's inheritance is derived from the sale of a substantial stake in listed Suvon Pharmaceuticals in 2022 to global private equity

# China now India's top trading partner

China was India's top trading partner from 2013-14 till 2017-18 and also in 2020-21. Before China, the UAE was the country's largest trading partner. The US was the largest partner in 2021-22 and 2022-23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** China has emerged as the largest trading partner of India with \$118.4 billion two-way commerce in 2023-24, slightly edging past the US, according to the data of economic think tank GTRI.

The bilateral trade between India and the US stood at \$118.3 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The data showed that India's exports to China rose by 8.7 per cent to \$16.67 billion in the last fiscal. The main sectors which recorded healthy growth in exports to that country include iron ore, cotton yarn/fabrics/madeups, handloom, spices, fruits and vegetables, plastic and linoleum.

Imports from the neighbouring country increased by 3.24 per cent to \$101.7 billion.

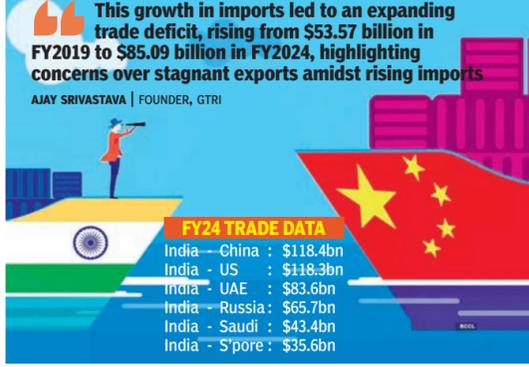
On the other hand, exports to the US dipped by 1.32 per cent to \$77.5 billion in 2023-24 as against \$78.54 billion in 2022-23, while imports dipped by about 20 per cent to \$40.8 billion, the data showed.

The Global Trade Research

Initiative (GTRI) said that from fiscal year 2019 to FY2024, India's trade dynamics with its top 15 trading partners underwent significant transformations, impacting both exports and imports along with the status of trade surplus or deficit across various sectors.

It added that China witnessed a marginal decline in exports by 0.6 per cent, from \$16.75 billion to \$16.66 billion, while imports from China surged by 44.7 per cent, from \$70.32 billion to \$101.75 billion.

Conversely, it said, trade with



the US showed growth, with exports increasing significantly by 47.9 per cent from \$52.41 billion to \$77.52 billion.

Imports from the US also grew by 14.7 per cent, from \$35.55 billion to \$40.78 billion. This resulted in an expanded trade surplus for India, which grew from \$16.86 billion to \$36.74 billion.

In 2023-24, the UAE with \$83.6 billion, was the third largest trading partner of India. It was followed by Russia (\$65.7 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$43.4 billion), and Singapore (\$35.6 billion).

## PROFIT BOOKING

# Gold ETFs see 1st outflow in over a year

Gold Exchange Traded Fund witnessed a net withdrawal of ₹396 crore in April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** Gold Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) witness a net outflow of ₹396 crore last month, making it the first withdrawal after March 2023, owing to profit booking.

Despite the decline, the asset under management (AUM) of gold funds rose 5 per cent to ₹32,789 crore at April-end from ₹31,224 crore in the preceding month, according to the data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

As per the data, Gold ETFs saw a net withdrawal of ₹396 crore in April as compared to an inflow of ₹373 crore in the preceding month.

The last time this asset class witnessed net outflow was in March 2023, withdrawing ₹266 crore.

"In INR terms, gold has done fairly well over the last year but dwarfs in comparison to how equities have fared. Given this backdrop, flows in the Gold ETF category have been somewhat

Investing in gold ETFs offers unparalleled advantages including liquidity, cost-effectiveness, and security

**VISHAL JAIN** | CEO, ZERODHA FUND HOUSE

patchy relative to the equity asset class. That said, investors could have opted to book some profits in this segment which has resulted in the asset class witnessing net outflows despite the rise in prices," Melvyn Santarita, Analyst, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Recently gold prices in US dollar terms as well as INR terms, have scaled new highs. With ongoing geopolitical tensions, US inflation still higher than the desired number, the appeal of gold as a safe haven and hedge against inflation is expected to continue, he added.

In 2023, Gold ETFs witnessed an inflow of ₹2,920 crore, which was way higher than the ₹459 crore inflow seen in 2022. The attractiveness of gold as a safe

haven and a hedge against inflation enhanced significantly during the year.

Investors turned to this traditional safe haven owing to rising inflation, subsequent interest rate hikes, and geopolitical events, seeking a secure investment option.

Gold, with its superlative performance over the last few years, has garnered substantial investor interest and the consistent increase in folio numbers serves as a testament to its attractiveness.

The folio numbers in gold ETFs rose by over 1 lakh to 51.84 lakh in the month under review from 50.61 lakh in March 2024. This indicates a growing inclination among investors towards funds related to gold.

Preference for gold during the time of adversity is also notable from the investment inflow into Gold ETFs during 2020 when the world was engulfed with the Covid-19 pandemic.

An analysis for the period between 2019 to 2023 shows that yearly growth in AUM of Gold ETFs has been on the rise. The AUM increased significantly from ₹5,528 crore in December 2019 to ₹13,819 crore in December 2020 during the pandemic period.

As of December 2023, the AUM was valued at ₹25,959 crore, marking a substantial increase of 27 per cent from December 2022, 88 per cent from December 2020 and 41 per cent from 2021.

## Large PSUs spend ₹50,200cr in capex

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** Large public sector companies have spent a little over ₹50,200 crore towards capital expenditure in April FY25 alone, which is 6.46 per cent of their full fiscal target of ₹7.77 lakh crore, an official said.

The pace albeit is slower than ₹54,177 crore capex spent in April FY24, about 7.3 per cent of the full year budget target of ₹7.42 lakh crore.

The capex spending will pick up going forward. Also, the numbers for April are still provisional and will go up in the revised final numbers, the official told PTI.

The capital expenditure during the first month of 2024-25 fiscal was driven by railways, road, and oil and gas sectors.

The Indian Railways and sector PSUs spent ₹26,641 crore in April, followed by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) at ₹6,645 crore.

Among oil and gas sector PSUs, ONGC incurred capex of ₹2,318 crore, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) ₹2,423 crore in the first month of the current financial year.

Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd spent ₹1,155 crore and ₹417 crore, respectively in April.

Power sector PSU NTPC spent ₹2,083 crore.

The finance ministry tracks capital expenditure of public sector undertakings (PSUs) that have an annual investment target of over Rs 100 crore.

## POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

# FPIs turn aggressive sellers amid polls

FOREIGN INVESTORS WITHDRAW ₹17,000CR FROM EQUITIES IN MAY



Given the current political uncertainty in India and with US interest rates still appealing, FPIs have shifted to a risk-off mode

**KRISHNA APPALA** | SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST, CAPITALMIND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** Foreign investors pulled out a massive ₹17,000 crore from Indian equities in the first 10 days of the month owing to general election and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome coupled with expensive valuations and profit booking.

This was way higher than a net withdrawal of ₹8,700 crore in the entire April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

Before that, FPIs made a net investment of ₹35,098 crore in March and ₹1,539 crore in February.

Looking ahead, post-general elections, corporate India's strong financial performance in Q4 FY24 is anticipated to be rewarded.

While FPIs may adopt a cautious stance until the election results are clear, favourable outcomes and established political stability could see their return in significant numbers, Trivish D, COO at Tradejini, said.

According to the data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) experienced a net outflow of ₹17,083 crore in equities this month (till May 10).

There are multiple reasons behind this aggressive selling by FPIs. With the ongoing general election and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome, investors are wary to enter the markets before the election results, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Also, with Indian markets trading at relatively high valuations, many investors would have found this as an opportunity to book profit and wait until more clarity emerges on the country's political landscape, he added.

Another reason could be profit booking by FPIs in anticipation of a market correction, particularly around results day, Tradejini's Trivish said.

On the global front, the US Fed has indicated no rate cuts until inflation cools, thus raising scepticism over the possibility of an early rate cut. It led to the appreciation in US dollar leading to a surge in US Treasury yields.

On the other hand, FPIs withdrew ₹1,602 crore from the debt market during the period under review.

Before this outflow, foreign investors injected ₹13,602 crore in March, ₹22,419 crore in February, ₹19,836 crore in January. This inflow was driven by the upcoming inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index. JP Morgan Chase & Co in September last year announced it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June 2024.

This landmark inclusion is anticipated to benefit India by attracting around \$20-40 billion in the subsequent 18 to 24 months.

FPIs have turned sustained sellers and domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have turned sustained buyers in all trading days of this month, so far, with cumulative DII buying of ₹19,410 crore, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Overall, FPIs withdrew a net amount of Rs 14,860 crore in equities in 2024 so far. They, however, invested Rs 14,307 crore in debt market.

Overall, FPIs withdrew a net amount of ₹14,860cr in equities in 2024 so far. They, however, invested ₹14,307cr in debt market

# FMCG companies expect volume growth in FY25

COMPANIES SUCH AS BRITANNIA, MARICO, DABUR, GCPL AND HUL IN THEIR LATEST MARCH QUARTER EARNINGS ALSO EXPECT A REVENUE GROWTH IN THE NEW FINANCIAL YEAR AS THE DEFLATIONARY CYCLE IS OVER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** Leading FMCG makers expect a volume-led growth in FY25, with a revival in consumption supported by a lower inflationary environment, projections of a normal monsoon and good rabi crop.

Companies such as Britannia, Marico, Dabur, GCPL and HUL in their latest March quarter earnings also expect a revenue growth in the new financial year as the deflationary cycle is over.

The companies were forced to slash prices as prices of major commodities had fallen, which had in turn impacted their topline and value growth in the last two quarters of FY24.

Besides, they expect a gradual uptick from the rural market, which contributes over one-third FMCG sales in the country.

For Dabur "a volume growth will be the way forward" in this

fiscal, said its CEO Mohit Malhotra in an investor call.

He remains optimistic of the gradual uptick in consumption trends in FY25 and expects a "mid-to-high single digit volume growth" considering a normal monsoon, improving macroeconomic indicators, government spending and lower inflation.

"Till last year, we were at least having some price increase anyway and now going forward it's going to be mostly driven by volume across categories while we budget a 3 per cent price increase, but price increase will be fairly limited in some parts of the portfolio while the rest will be driven by volume only for us. So we feel it will be mid-to-high single digit volume growth..." said Malhotra.

Britannia Industries Vice Chairman and Managing Director Varun Berry said FY25 "is a year of topline growth" and expects a



double-digit volume growth post election and monsoon.

"Our outlook on this year is not deflationary. Our outlook on this year is slightly inflationary, which is a healthy inflation of 3 per cent," he said during an investor call.

When asked about volume growth this year, Berry said he expects it to be "quite solid".

"Post-election, post-monsoon, we would be aiming towards a double-digit volume growth, for sure."

Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) expects a "high single digit volume growth" this fiscal year from its India market and to step up profitability from its global markets.

In an investor presentation,

GCPL MD & CEO Sudhir Sitapati said it has a three-pronged strategy for FY25 - premiumisation, efficiency and affordability.

The company, which owns brands as HIT, Cinthol and Good Knight has aspirations for a high single-digit growth on medium term and double-digit in the long term.

Marico, which owns brands like Saffola, Parachute, Livon etc, aims to "deliver healthy revenue-led earnings growth in FY25". The company, which reported 3 per cent volume growth in the domestic market in March quarter, expects a "gradual uptick in the growth" of its core categories, against the backdrop of improving macro-indicators and forecast of a normal monsoon, it said.

Leading FMCG player HUL said it continues to see positive volume growth across most of its business.

# Pragg finishes fourth

Carlsen wins Superbet rapid and blitz tournament



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Warsaw, May 12:** Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa proved himself better than his peers and finished clear fourth while Magnus Carlsen came up with a rousing 8/9 performance on the final day to seal his place at the top of the tables in the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament, a part of the grand chess tour.

Leading by a huge 2.5 points margin going in to the last day with nine rounds of blitz still remaining, Wei Yi of China had to be content with a second place finish after a below par 5

points in the last nine games.

Carlsen won by a whisker getting past Yi in the closing stages of the tournament. The World number one was visibly tired after nine games yesterday followed by another four games in an event that he played online.

However, when it comes to crunch situations, Carlsen reminds why he is hailed as one of the best ever player in current times. Scoring one win after another, the Norwegian won seven and drew just two games to reach the magical 26 points, a half point more than Wei Yi in the overall standings.

## FINAL RESULTS RAPID

1. Magnus Carlsen - 26;
2. Wei Yi - 25.5;
3. Duda - 19.5;
4. Praggnanandhaa - 19;
5. Arjun - 18;
6. Abdusattorov - 17.5;
7. Shevchenko - 15;
8. Giri - 14;
9. Keymer - 13.5; 10. Gukesh - 12.5

This was almost a dead-heat wherein Carlsen nosed ahead.

Duda Jan-Kryzstof of Poland saved his blushes for the last and finished third on 19.5 points and Praggnanandhaa was right

behind him a half point adrift.

Erigaisi Arjun finished fifth on 18 points, ahead of Nodirbek Abdusattorov on 17.5. Kirill Shevchenko who had started off with three brilliant wins on the opening day in rapid ended sixth on 17 points in all for his seventh place finish while Anish Giri washed off his earlier blues in the tournament to finish eighth eventually on 14 points.

Vincent Keymer of Germany ended ninth on 13.5 a full point ahead of world championship challenger D Gukesh who clearly struggled here.

# CSK humble RR by 5 wickets

THE WIN BRIGHTENS PLAY-OFFS PROSPECTS FOR SUPER KINGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, May 12:** Chennai Super Kings stayed in contention for a place in the IPL play-offs with a five-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals after pacer Simarjeet Singh exemplified the home team's discipline with the ball with career-best figures of 3/26 here Sunday.

In a low-scoring match which had its share of drama with Ravindra Jadeja being given out for obstructing the field, CSK chased down a target of 142 with 10 balls to spare on a tricky surface.

Skipper Rituraj Gaikwad was the star for CSK with the bat, remaining unbeaten on a 41-ball 42.

Rachin Ravindra (27 off 18 balls) and Gaikwad managed a 32-run stand before the former was dismissed by Ravichandran Ashwin in the fourth over.

However, that did not have any impact on Gaikwad and Daryl Mitchell (22 off 13 balls) as they maintained a run rate of over nine and ended the power-play at 56 for one.

Pacer Sandeep Sharma was the most expensive bowler for the visitors during this phase and was hammered for 23 runs.

Mitchell appeared to be the man on a mission, but his stay was cut short by spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who trapped him leg-before wicket in the eighth over to end a 35-run partnership with Gaikwad.

Moeen Ali (10 off 13 balls) came in next, but he holed out to Nandre Burger in the 12th over. With the score reading 92 for



three in the 13th over, Shivam Dube decided to have a go at Ashwin in his final over.

While Dube hammered Ashwin for a six and two fours in the over, the veteran had the last laugh, which also turned out to be his 50th IPL wicket at this venue.

Also, Jadeja (5 off 6 balls) survived a scare in the subsequent over after Jos Buttler dropped him off Chahal at long-on.

Rookie Sameer Rizvi then hit an eight-ball 15 not out with three fours to end the game in a jiffy after Jadeja became the third batter in IPL history to be adjudged out for obstructing the field after miscommunication with Gaikwad, who refused to go for a second run even as the all-rounder was halfway down the pitch.

CSK needed 21 off the final four overs, and the duo of Gaikwad and Rizvi got the job done. The win took CSK to the third spot on the points table, while RR suffered their third straight defeat but remained in second position.

Earlier, Simarjeet dished out his best performance in the IPL while helping CSK restrict RR to a modest total.

For the visitors, the in-form Riyan Parag top-scored with a 35-ball unbeaten 47 on a slow wicket.

Opting to bat, the RR openers were off to a cautious start. After RR ended the powerplay at 42 for no loss, the 26-year-old Simarjeet made the first breakthrough in the seventh over, getting rid of Jaiswal (24 runs off 21 balls).

## SHORT TAKES

### Ramandeep fined 20% match fees

**Kolkata:** Kolkata Knight Riders medium pacer Ramandeep Singh has been fined 20 per cent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during their match against Mumbai Indians at the Eden Gardens here. The 27-year-old committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.20 of the IPL Code of Conduct. He admitted to the offence and accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding.

### T20: Zimbabwe beat Bangladesh

**Dhaka:** Zimbabwe avoided a series clean sweep by beating Bangladesh by eight wickets in the fifth and final T20 match Sunday. After being put in to bat, Bangladesh made 157-6 but Brian Bennett's 70 off 49 balls, with five fours and as many sixes, set the platform of Zimbabwe's victory with nine balls to spare. Unlike the past four matches, Zimbabwe was able to resist a top order collapse as Raza and Bennett dealt with Bangladesh's bowling with a good balance of caution and attack.

## Federation Cup athletics starts on low-key note

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 12:** Defending champion and joint national record holder 400m hurdler Vithya Ramraj pulled out of her event due to back pain as the National Federation Cup Senior Athletics Competition made a low-key start here Sunday.

Vithya, part of the Indian women's 4x400m relay squad that booked a Paris Olympics berth in Bahamas recently, did not start the women's 400m hurdles final on the opening day of the competition at the Kalinga Stadium.

Veerpal Kaur of Punjab won the gold with a very slow time of 59.43 seconds. Salini Valuparambil of Kerala was second with a time of 1:00.73 while Ramandeep Kaur of Punjab took the third spot in 1:01.29.

The 25-year-old Vithya had run the first leg of the first round Olympic qualifying heat race but was replaced in the second round by Rupal Chaudhary in Nassau in the World Relays.

She had equalled the legendary PT Usha's 400m hurdles national record of 55.42 seconds during the Asian Games in Hangzhou in October last year. "I am having back pain. There is still jet lag also as we returned from Bahamas just a few days

ago," Vithya told PTI.

Jyothika Sri Dandi, another member of the relay squad, said, "It was an intense training and competition (for one month in Bahamas) with Olympic qualification being the target, it was very intense. So, we are kind of taking time to get into another competition."

Vithya of Tamil Nadu had won the 400m hurdles gold in the last edition of this competition with a time of 57.51 seconds.

The men's 400m hurdles was won by Santosh Kumar of Tamil Nadu with a time of 50.04 seconds. Nikhil Bhardwaj (50.92) of Punjab and Dhaval Mahesh Utekar (51.13) of Gujarat were second and third respectively.

The four-day event has become a high-profile one after Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra decided to participate in it. He is competing in a domestic event for the first time in three years. He had taken part in the 2021 edition of the same event.

The qualifying round of the men's javelin event will be held Tuesday while the final will be Wednesday.

Meanwhile, a dope testing team of National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) has arrived here to take samples from the athletes.

## RCB beat DC by 47 runs to keep play-off hopes alive

PATIDAR FIFTY, GRITTY BOWLERS KEEP ROYAL CHALLENGERS IN PLAY-OFF RACE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, May 12:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru kept their playoff dreams intact through Rajat Patidar's blazing fifty and a strong-willed effort from the bowlers, who set up the hosts' 47-run victory over Delhi Capitals in the IPL here Sunday.

The target of 188 was not insurmountable, but the Capitals' chase descended into disarray once they lost four wickets inside 3.3 overs upfront, eventually finishing at 140, with Axar Patel 57 (39b, 5x4, 3x6) playing a lone hand.

RCB now have 12 points from 13 matches - same as the Capitals - and need a win against Chennai Super Kings in the last league match here May 18 to push their case for a playoff berth.

The Capitals also need a win in their final league game against Lucknow Super Giants May 14 to stay in the hunt.

Cutting back to the match, Impact Player David Warner,



who missed the action for close to a month due to a wrist injury, slog-swept left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh into the waiting hands of Will Jacks at deep.

The dismissal flagged off Capitals' train of disaster: Left-arm pacer Yash Dayal (3/20) consumed Abhishek Porel, caught at covers by Lockie Ferguson, in the first ball of the third over.

Delhi suffered a body blow in the very next ball. The in-form Jack-Fraser McGurk, who smashed Mohammed Siraj for two fours and a six in the second over, backed up too far as Shai Hope's straight drive rattled the stumps after taking a deflection

of Dayal's outstretched left-hand. Siraj trapped Kumar Kushagra, who came in for the suspended Rishabh Pant, plumb in front with a nip-backer as DC slumped to 30 for four.

Axar and Hope (29, 23b) added 56 runs for the fifth wicket off 36 balls but the partnership offered only temporary relief than any real hope to the visitors.

Axar, who took over the reins of DC in the absence of Pant, played a handy innings, but it just delayed the inevitable.

The rest of the DC batters were bogged down by a confused mind, best exemplified by the run out of Tristan Stubbs.

## Deeksha sets new Indian record in LA athletics meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 12:** Indian track athlete KM Deeksha set a new national record in the women's 1,500m while Avinash Sable finished second in men's 5,000m event at the Sound Running Track Fest in Los Angeles.

The 25-year-old Deeksha finished third in the final Saturday after running the distance in 4:04.78, bettering the previous record of 4:05.39 set by Harmilan Bains in 2021 at the National Open Athletics Championships in Warangal.

Deeksha's previous personal best was a 4:06.07 set in the final of the National Inter-State Athletics Championships at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar in 2023, where she upstaged Bains to win gold.

Deeksha who is from Amroha, UP has been part of the MP Athletics academy for the last five years training under coach SK Prasad.

Parul Chaudhary ran 15:10.69s in the women's 5,000m to finish fifth. Parul narrowly missed out on improving her national record while compatriot Ankita ended 10th with a time of 15:28.88.

Sable finished second in the men's 5,000m with a time of 13:20.37 and not his pet 3,000m steeplechase event, and in the same event, Gulveer Singh ran a 13:31.95.

## 'We are working to be in best shape possible for Paris'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, May 12:** The Indian men's hockey team has identified areas that "needed attention" following its whitewash by Australia in the five-Test series and is ready for the tough European leg of the Pro League, said skipper Harmanpreet Singh Sunday.

Last month, India, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medallists, lost all their matches to the Kookaburras, raising doubts about their preparations for the Paris Games later this year.

But drag-flicker Harmanpreet said the squad has done a lot of high-intensity training and the confidence in the side continues to grow.

"We are in the last stages of an intense training block right now. The team has worked on the areas we felt needed attention after the tour of Australia," said Harmanpreet in a Hockey India release.

"Soon, we will head to Europe



to play some essential matches in the Pro League 2023/24 to test ourselves against some tough opponents like Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain. The chemistry in the squad continues to grow and

with only 75 days left for the Paris Olympics we are working to be in the best shape possible," he added.

India will begin their Olympic campaign against New Zealand July 27. The other teams in Pool

B are Belgium, Australia, Argentina, and Ireland.

Pool A comprises the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, South Africa, and hosts France.

India vice-captain Hardik Singh said the experience of stalwarts like goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and former captain Manpreet Singh has come in handy while preparing youngsters for the Summer Games.

"The team is leaving no stone unturned in our endeavour to change the colour of our previous medal and clinch gold at the Olympics this time. We have players like PR Sreejesh and Manpreet Singh who could be playing their fourth Olympics along with quite a few players who could be playing their third Olympics, including our captain. Their experience has been instrumental in moulding some of the younger players we have in the squad right now. Only 75 days remain for the Paris Olympics and we cannot wait to begin our Olympic journey," added Hardik.

## Al Hilal keep Ronaldo trophy-less

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Riyadh, May 12:** Record-breaking Al Hilal sealed their fourth Saudi Pro League title in five years Saturday, extending Cristiano Ronaldo's wait for silverware in the big-spending competition.

Al Hilal, who lost Neymar Junior to injury in October, beat bottom-placed Al Hazm 4-1 to go an unbeatable 12 points clear of Ronaldo's Al Nassr with three matches remaining.

The title seals a formidable campaign by Al Hilal, who remain unbeaten in 31 league matches and put together a run of 34 consecutive wins in all competitions -- a record for a top-flight team.

Jorge Jesus's Riyadh club have now secured bragging rights in the most anticipated Saudi season of all time, after Ronaldo's arrival in January last year triggered a flood of



big-name arrivals.

Neymar, Karim Benzema, Sadio Mane, N'Golo Kante and Riyad Mahrez were among the veterans to up sticks for Saudi, the world's biggest oil exporter, on eye-watering contracts.

The 'Big Four' Saudi clubs - Al Hilal, Al Nassr, Benzema's Al Ittihad and Mahrez's Al Ahli

-- are all owned by the Public Investment Fund, the sovereign wealth vehicle that is driving Saudi's economic diversification from oil.

Al Hilal will look to frustrate Ronaldo, 39, again when they take on city rivals Al Nassr in the King's Cup final May 31.