



## Beating complacency

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu says despite her extensive experience in various film industries, she still sees herself as a newcomer

LEISURE | P2



## UK gov't's new agenda

Britain's King Charles sets out Prime Minister Keir Starmer's legislative agenda Wednesday, promising new reforms

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Growth forecast

The Asian Development Bank maintains India's GDP growth forecast at 7 per cent for the current financial year

BUSINESS | P11



## Usha slams critics

IOA president PT Usha slams critics over questions regarding the increase in number of support staff in the Indian contingent for Paris

SPORTS | P12

## Ratna Bhandar: Devotees' entry to Srimandir restricted

AGENCIES

**Puri, July 17:** The authorities of the Jagannath temple in Puri imposed restrictions on the visit of devotees to the 12th-century shrine for Thursday when valuable from the inner chamber of the Ratna Bhandar is scheduled to be shifted to a temporary strong room, an official said.

The shifting was necessary for the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the custodian of the temple, to carry out conservation work inside the inner chamber which was reopened July 14 after 46 years for preparing an inventory of valuables and the repair of its structure.

The Ratna Bhandar, located in the basement of the temple, has an outer and an inner chamber.

"As the arrangements are made to open the inner chamber of Ratna Bhandar again Thursday, we have imposed restrictions on the entry of devotees into the temple. None will be allowed to enter after 8am of Thursday," Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief Arabinda Padhee said Wednesday.

Only authorised persons and servants will be allowed entry into the temple after 8am and just the 'Singha Dwar' (Lion's Gate) of the shrine will remain open Thursday, he said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I told him I'm here to complain about the menace of fake certificates, and he's been missing ever since

## WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	34.2°C	33.0°C
Min Temp	26.8°C	26.0°C
Humidity	88%	88%
Rainfall	8.4mm	9.4mm

## FORECAST

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of moderate rain or thundershower

## STAMPEDE-LIKE SITUATION

### Thousands turn up for loaders' job

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 17:** A stampede-like situation prevailed near the Mumbai airport where thousands of job aspirants gathered to apply for a limited number of vacancies for the post of loader though the police Wednesday claimed they had made adequate arrangements to avoid any untoward incident.

The incident took place Tuesday and the situation was later brought under control, officials from the Sahar police station, under whose jurisdiction the airport falls, said. No one was reported to be injured.

More than 6,000 candidates gathered near the airport to submit their applications and police faced difficulties in managing the crowd, they said.

To avoid a similar situation, aspirants were asked to come in batches and only 550 candidates took part in the recruitment drive Wednesday.

With applications and rele-



**GOLD ATTIRE:** Gold ornaments adorn Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra on the occasion of Suna Besha, Wednesday

PHOTOS: SJTA X

## CHURNING IN UP BJP

*Rumblings in the Uttar Pradesh unit of the BJP are out in the open with the state leaders holding back-to-back meetings with the party's top brass in New Delhi. Weeks after the party suffered a setback in the Lok Sabha polls in the politically crucial state, a rift between Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his deputy Keshav Prasad Maurya has come to the fore with voices within the party flagging concerns over the Chief Minister's style of functioning which, according to them, has led to the BJP's poor show in the recent elections*

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 17:** Uttar Pradesh BJP president Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary met Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday, sources said and is believed to have briefed him on a host of issues related to the party's organisational matters in the politically crucial state.

Chaudhary and the state's Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya had met BJP national president JP Nadda separately Tuesday amid signs of dissonant voices emerging from within the party in the state where it suffered shock losses in the Lok Sabha polls at the hands of the SP-Congress alliance.

Maurya's differences with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath are widely acknowledged even within the party, and his comment at a state party meeting that "organisation is always big-



ger than government and no one can be bigger than the organization" was seen by many political watchers as a message to the monk-politician.

He had made the remarks in presence of Adityanath and Nadda, while the Chief Minister blamed 'over-confidence' for the electoral reverses in the state and suggested that the party could not effectively counter the opposition INDIA bloc's campaign.

With the party's top brass speaking to Maurya and Chaudhary, considered a sober and objective voice, they seem to be taking steps to put their house in order against a resurgent Opposition in the state, which has been critical to the BJP's rise as the dominant national force since the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

The Deputy Chief Minister further stirred the pot Wednesday by posting his "organisation is bigger than government..." comments from his office's social media handle. In private conversations, a number of BJP leaders from the state, including those who lost in the Lok

## K'taka's U-turn on job quota

REUTERS

**Bangalore, July 17:** The state government of Karnataka has put on hold a bill mandating companies to give 50%-70% of jobs to locals following a huge backlash from various quarters.

Bangalore is home to about 14 million people, and thousands of Indian startups and international firms ranging from Walmart to Alphabet's Google operate from the metropolitan city in south India. Infosys and Wipro - two Indian tech giants - also operate from the city.

The draft bill required employers to give 50% of management jobs and 70% of non-management jobs to local candidates. Industry leaders criticised

the bill, saying it would discriminate against those from outside the state. "There must be caveats that exempt highly skilled recruitment from this policy," said Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, executive chairperson at drugmaker Biocoin.

Mohandas Pai, chairman of Aarin Capital Partners and former finance chief at Infosys, wrote in a social media post: "The bill should be junked. It is discriminatory, regressive and against the Constitution."

IT industry body Nasscom also urged the state government to withdraw the bill.

Haryana in 2020 tried to impose a 75% job quota for local hires, but a court later overturned it.

## Bulldozer action in state soon

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** Odisha may soon witness 'bulldozer action' as adopted in states like Uttar Pradesh, with the state government Wednesday warning that illegal constructions made on government land will be demolished.

Speaking on the state's plan to crackdown on unauthorised structures on public land, Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari told reporters that huts and similar structures made by poor people on small pieces of encroached land were being pulled down, while rich and influential elements were left untouched in the state in the past.

**There are many powerful and influential people as well as officials who have encroached upon government land at several places**  
**SURESH PUJARI | REVENUE MINISTER**

"However, the Odisha government has now made up its mind to take action against the rich and influential people in the state," he warned.

Stating that the government has

## ARINDAM DAKUA APPOINTED PRIVATE SECRETARY TO CM



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The state government Thursday appointed Cuttack Collector Arindam Dakua as Private Secretary to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, while Jagatsinghpur Collector Anupam Saha has been appointed as Additional Secretary to the CM.

Earlier, in April this year Dakua was appointed as the Collector and District Magistrate (DM) of Cuttack and Saha was appointed as the Collector and DM of Jagatsinghpur.

Dakua, a 2011-batch IAS officer, was appointed as the new DM of Cuttack replacing Vineet Bhardwaj, while Saha, a 2012-batch IAS officer, replaced Parul Patwari as Jagatsinghpur DM.

## 'No need for Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'

**Kolkata:** Senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari Wednesday attributed the party's poor performance in Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal to lack of support from the minority community, asserting that 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' was unnecessary and proposing instead 'Hum unke saath jo humare saath' (we are with those who are with us). The West Bengal BJP unit, however, distanced itself from Adhikari's comments as 'personal remarks'.

## Doc brings India its first Miss Universal Petite crown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, July 17:** Miss Universal Petite, a beauty pageant designated for ladies 5'6 feet or less, has for the first time an Indian winner.

Imagine doing a 36-hour shift in a hospital and then turning up willingly the next day to chip away the imperfections to become a beauty queen? That is what Shruti Hegde, a doctor and a beauty queen from Hubli, Karnataka, has been doing since 2018. This Kannadiga's hard work has paid off though.

A little over a month ago, June 10, Shruti Hegde became Miss Universal Petite, a pageant that was started in 2009 to give opportunity to shorter women, who found themselves often dwarfed by the amazonian standards when it comes to height. The pageantry is held in Tampa, Florida in the United States of America, every year.

"It was not easy for sure. I realised that being a doctor is a lot more work than I initially

thought. Yes, it becomes too much at times. But I don't think I will be choosing one over the other. Instead, I want to find a balance between both," said Hegde to PTI. When she took the pageantry route, Hegde said she never gave much thought to winning.

"I am always wanting to do new things, and I guess it is almost every small-town girl's dream - to be a beauty queen. So, I thought I'll just give it a try. It helped that I had a mother who is keener than me that I should do what I want to do," said Hegde.

That is how Hegde found herself signing up for Miss Dharwad contest in 2018. But when she made it to the finals, things took a serious turn.

"During the course of the contest, I realised that I was learning a lot of life lessons too - the kind that will help me be a better person and be better equipped to tackle any kind of situation. So, I decided to give my all to it, and see where it took me," said Hegde, who is currently pursuing MD in dermatology in



Tumakuru, a city about 70 km away from Bangalore.

But she soon hit the next roadblock. Not only did a small town like Hubballi have the necessary means for all the preparations required to become a beauty queen, but she also had to take a break and deal with a medical emergency.

"In 2019, I was diagnosed with benign ovarian and uterine tumours and had to undergo open surgery. This ate up two years of my life - 2019 and 2020 - as I recuperated. I thought that was the end of my pageantry career for a while. Again, my mother wouldn't let me off so easily. She stood behind me like a rock," said Hegde. And so, Hegde said she bounced back, went tripping all over India, taking classes to get herself the poised look of a beauty queen.

"There's so much to it - diet, clothing, walking... And initially, you will have to spend for all that, a couple of lakhs at least. But by now nothing could stop me, I wanted to go all the way," said Hegde.

# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
Do something really exciting today - perhaps you could put on your trekking boots and explore unknown territories. Ganesh advises you to keep busy but not to go overboard. In group activities today, everybody will focus their attention on you.

**TAURUS**  
This day your mind is likely to be blissfully drawn towards your personal friends and family members. Your warm and intimate relationships will stay uppermost in your mind and fill the day, not leaving room for anything else. Hanging out together with them will give you immense pleasure and contentment.

**GEMINI**  
You will become more emotional and sensitive today. Health, diet, career, job and such things will be on your mind and will give rise to mental stress and worry. You need to take care of your health and hygiene, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Today, you are likely to experience something life-changing. A small incident, an observation, a tragedy, a disaster, or a simple thought may change the course of your life. You, however, may not be able to take the changes well. It may have a strong bearing on your health.

**LEO**  
You will give importance to your work and your style of functioning to get a promotion in the office. You will also increase the amount of work you put in. While the fruits of your labour may not be immediately available to you, in a very short time you can expect to make more gains than you expected to.

**VIRGO**  
You will be really very tough today, like a man of steel, but there is enough warmth in your heart. Forbearance, positivity and extremely artistic abilities will predominate. Ganesh advises you to pursue the arts in your studies. Your deep insight into life will help you in serving society in a better way.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will put everything aside to pay more attention to your outward appearance and your beauty as you will be more aware about it. People will get attracted to your beauty today. You will be able to share your own ideas and thoughts with people, at the same time you will learn about their views and from their experiences.

**SCORPIO**  
Keep your eyes and ears open and believe in only what you see. Remember, believing in rumours may lead to ugly situations. Your efforts to be different and stand out would pay off well, predicts Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The day begins on a bright note and you decide to flaunt your sunny side up, foresees Ganesh. At home front, sharing of work with your partner will keep the home atmosphere peaceful and harmonious. Both of you discover a joy in cleaning and cooking together. A perfect recipe for love!

**CAPRICORN**  
You are beaming with optimism and positive energy. Such strong vibes will penetrate through the day and maintain the energy level right till the end. Not everyone is blessed with such spirit, so will certainly have an upper hand at work, be it your profession or business, says Ganesh. You will enjoy a smooth, peaceful and beautiful married life with your spouse, blesses Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
You are an excellent team player and your performance reaches a new high when you are a part of a group. Be an active member of your group, express your opinions, share your knowledge and see how your team becomes the winning team, says Ganesh. Wind up your day by hanging out with friends and family.

**PISCES**  
You will bump into an old friend or a distant relative today. This rendezvous may be with a person who you were close to long ago and it will warm your heart with nostalgia. You might contemplate taking a break from your daily grind to spend sometime to relive your childhood memories or visit your hometown.



## GLEN POWELL STUDYING FOR DEGREE ON ZOOM

American actor Glen Powell is studying for his college degree via Zoom and praised director Edgar Wright for being accommodating of his study schedule. The *Twisters* actor is just a few units away from graduating from the University of Texas at Austin, according to a report.

## PORTMAN PREFERS NOT TO PLAY HERSELF ON SCREEN

Actress Natalie Portman says she prefers to stay away from characters that reflect her own life. The 43-year-old Oscar winner adds that she likes to reserve her own personality for when the cameras are off.



## I've to embrace my age: Tabu

**Mumbai:** After being part of the industry for over three decades, Tabu has garnered vast experience which has helped her develop a set of guiding principles that help her navigate the film world. One of the most important rules for Tabu is that she's done playing young women on screen. In an interview with a news portal, she confessed that she's not about to pretend to be young onscreen, and wants to embrace her age in real and reel life. That's one of the reasons she got excited about Neeraj Panday's *Auron Mein Kaha Dum Tha*.

Tabu was happy that director Neeraj Panday didn't go the route of de-aging through VFX in his next, *Auron Mein Kaha Dum Tha*. The film marks reunion with Ajay Devgn. It is their tenth onscreen collaboration. In the interview, she shared that age-appropriate casting was the norm back in the day, saying that older actors have begun to play young characters onscreen in recent years only.

"This used to happen earlier too as there was no concept of de-aging. We saw different actors playing younger selves of the protagonists. Once they grew up, they became Dharmendra or Dilip Kumar. I think that with this film, we're continuing that tradition," she said.

Here, she added that she wouldn't want to essay a young woman onscreen unlike her male contemporaries. "I would refuse those parts. I don't think that I'll be open to playing a 30-year-old anymore. I've no option but to embrace my age," she emphasised.

**Mumbai:** Actress Adaa Khan has opened up on social media giving a lot of importance even while casting, saying it shouldn't overshadow an actor's skills and experience.

The *Naagin* fame diva said: "While social media presence can be a factor in casting decisions, I believe that talent and dedication should always be the primary considerations. Social media can be a useful tool to showcase one's personality and reach, but it shouldn't overshadow an actor's skills and experience."

"As an actor, I focus on honing my craft and delivering strong performances, trusting that my work will speak for itself," she shared. When it comes to social media, Adaa says that you need to strike a balance.

"Social media has become an integral part of my life, both personally and professionally. It offers a wonderful platform to connect with my fans, showcase my work, and stay updated with the industry. However, it's essential to maintain a balance and draw boundaries," said the *Rishton Ka Mela* actress.

She further said: "I avoid engaging in negativity and steer clear of content that promotes hate or disrespect. For me, it's important to use social media responsibly, to inspire and share positivity, rather than just chasing views and followers."

**'Social media shouldn't outshine an actor's skills'**



## List of qualities Ulka wants in her partner

**Mumbai:** Actress Ulka Gupta has a clear idea of the type of man she wants in her life, sharing that she would like someone with the qualities of her onscreen love interest, Aryaman, from the show *Main Hoon Saath Tere*.

Currently portraying Janvi in the show, Ulka envisions a partner like Aryaman, played by Karan Vohra - practical, yet sensitive, and supportive.

Talking about the same, Ulka said: "Whenever I think about listing the qualities I want in a partner, they would definitely include kindness, politeness, intelligence, good communication skills, and the ability to express his feelings. Aryaman's character on our show is the perfect example."

"He not only possesses these qualities but also has immense love for his family and respects personal boundaries. Moreover, he knows how to support his partner both emotionally and professionally," shared Ulka.

She further added: "These characteristics are essential because I believe they contribute to a harmonious partnership."

*Main Hoon Saath Tere* airs on Zee TV.

On the work front, Ulka first starred in the 2006 show *Resham Dankh*, which featured Rahul Azam and Mouli Ganguly in the lead roles.

She has also been a part of the web series *Modern Love Hyderabad*.

# Sam feels like a newcomer

**Hyderabad:** Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently opened up about her career and personal journey, and stated that despite her extensive experience in the industry, she still sees herself as a newcomer. Known for her versatile roles and impactful performances, Samantha has carved a niche for herself in film industries. The *Pushpa* actress, who debuted in cinema in 2010, has completed about 14 years in the industry, however, she continues to reinvent herself as an actor.

After making a name for herself in cinema, she also tried her hands at web series and emerged successful. Samantha has now shared that she still feels like a 'newcomer'.

Talking to *Elle*

**India, The Family Man 2** actress stated that she has so much to learn. "That's the magic of films because you have to step into a different character and world with each script and make it your own," she said. She expressed that though that thought is terrifying, it is also exciting.

Samantha, who has three projects gearing up for release this year, expressed that in her past filmography, she was focused on quality over quantity, which is keeping her in good stead for the new wave of changes in cinema. She also expressed that she is 'proud' of the women, who are demanding their space in the industry, and that she is glad to be a part of that change. "We are now asking for better roles and fully-fledged characters," she stated.

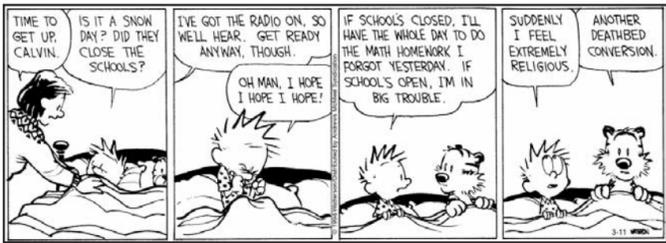
On the work front, Samantha will be soon seen in *Citadel: Honey Bunny* alongside Varun Dhawan.



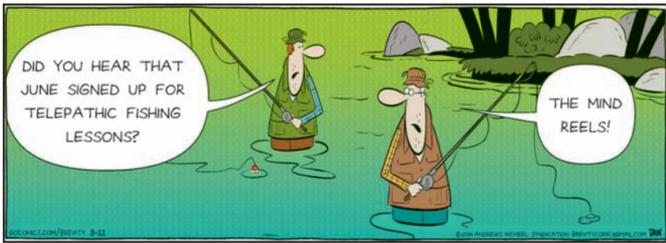
## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

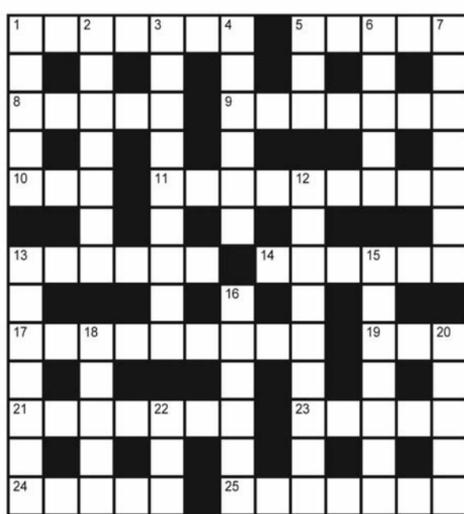


## BREVITY



## FUN post

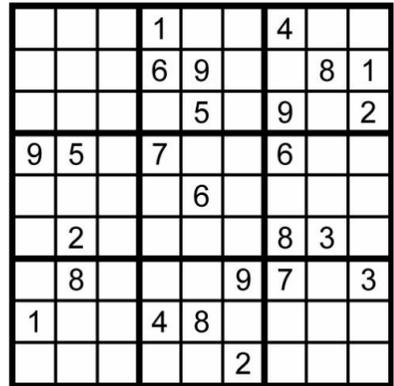
## CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Military unit
  - 5 Conditions
  - 8 Involuntary twitch
  - 9 Workout target
  - 10 Fishing equipment
  - 11 Earthquake site
  - 13 Liege subject
  - 14 Fairy tale figure
  - 17 Act up
  - 19 Séance sound
  - 21 Dunk
  - 23 Like helium
  - 24 Circumvent
  - 25 Health issue
  - 5 Wool weight unit
  - 6 Invoice word
  - 7 Genuine
  - 12 Tell it in softer terms
  - 13 Blood sucker
  - 15 Nazareth native
  - 16 Park structure
  - 18 Brazilian dance
  - 20 Trifling
  - 22 Parisian way
- Down**
- 1 Bricklayer
  - 2 Crude shelters (4-3)
  - 3 Zone starter
  - 4 Sweet wattle, e.g.

## SUDOKU

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

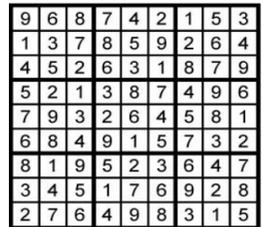


## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# LAKHS WITNESS DEITIES' GOLDEN ATTIRE

AGENCIES

**Puri, July 17:** Around 15 lakh devotees thronged the pilgrim town to witness the majestic Suna Besha (golden attire) of Lord Jagannath and His siblings— Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra – on their respective chariots parked in front of the 'Singha Dwar' (Lion's Gate) of Srimandir here, Wednesday.

The day began with a complex set of rituals like Mangala Alati, Mailum, Abakash and Surya Puja being performed by the servitors. Later the deities were offered dry bhog (offerings).

Sources said that the sibling deities wear gold jewellery, weighing nearly 208 kg on the occasion which, according to experts, began in the 15th century. The embellishment of the idols known as Suna Besha is held after the sibling deities return near the Lion's Gate of the 12th century shrine following their nine-day stay at the Gundicha Temple, considered their birthplace.

"The devotees can have darshan of the deities till 11pm Wednesday night," Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee told reporters.

Puri Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain said, "We have made arrangements for the smooth darshan for 15 lakh devotees. The golden attires of the deities would be removed at about 11pm. The people can have a glimpse of the Trinity between 5pm to 11pm."

The ornaments used in the Suna Besha are stored in the outer chamber of the Ratna Bhadar (treasury) and brought to the chariots escorted by armed security personnel, temple officials and priests.

The gold ornaments used in this ritual included hands, feet, third eyes, crowns, peacock feathers, earrings, necklaces and lotus.

Adhara Pana, a rare drink, will be offered to deities on the chariots Thursday night, and the homecoming ceremony, Niladri Bije, will be performed Friday. According to Jagannath culture researcher Asit Mohanty, the Suna Besha ritual began in Srimandir during the reign of Gajapati Kapilendra Deb in 1460 when the ruler brought 16 cartloads of gold to Odisha after winning wars over the rulers in southern India.

The king donated the gold and diamond to Lord Jagannath and instructed the temple priests to prepare ornaments for the Suna Besha of the Trinity.

Mohanty said the deities were decked up with gold ornaments of nearly 138 designs during the era of Kapilendra Deb. However, the number has come down to 20-30 now, though the designs have not changed. The ornaments used to get repaired as and when required using raw gold donated by pilgrims, he said.

Temple sources also said that the deities adorn such golden jewellery at least five times a year. While one such ritual is held outside the temple on chariots during the Rath Yatra, it is held inside during the four other times. The four occasions are Dusehra, Kartika Purnima, Pausa Purnima and Dola Purnima. Meanwhile, the state government and police have made elaborate security arrangements in the seaside temple town of Puri.

Around 5,700 police personnel have been deployed in the town. For the convenience of the devotees, the East Coast Railway has been running 46 special trains to Puri.

Adhara Pana will be offered to deities on the chariots Thursday and Niladri Bije will be performed Friday



## NGT forms panel for Bargarh sand mining

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has asked the state government to constitute a committee that would look into the allegations of illegal sand mining at Chikhili under Ambabhona tehsil of Bargarh district and submit a report within four weeks.

With a senior scientist of Odisha State Pollution Control Board, Bargarh mining officer and district Collector as its members, the committee would inspect the site and submit a fact finding report within four weeks with reference to the allegations, the Eastern Zone Bench of NGT said Tuesday.

"The district Collector shall be the Nodal Office for all logistic purposes and for filing counter-affidavit bringing on record the committee report," the bench said while posting the next hear-



ing for August 30, 2024.

The NGT move came while hearing a plea filed by senior advocate Sankar Prasad Pani on behalf of Fakir Mohan Patel of Prakashpur under Ambabhona tehsil of Bargarh.

The petitioner has informed the environment watchdog that illegal sand mining was being carried out at Chikhili. "Following allegations, the mining officer of Bargarh, along with police officials, raided the

sand stock and penalised him for 1,000cm of sand June 6. The miner, accordingly, paid Rs 2,10,000 as fine June 11 this year," Pani said.

He said following further complaint, the mining officer June 22 found huge sand stock. "Though the officer was urged to check more sites, he declined claiming jurisdiction issues," the petitioner said.

He said that the bridge near which the illegal sand mining was taking place connects Bargarh and Jharsuguda districts. The miner also transports sand to Jharsuguda. Besides, on the day of raid, the officer found use of machine for sand quarrying and loading in trucks. But he did not initiate any action in this regard," the petitioner said.

"The illegal mining has caused a loss of at least Rs 10 crore to the state exchequer," Pani said.

## BJD MLAs to monitor work of govt depts

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** BJD supreme Naveen Patnaik has asked party MLAs to closely monitor the activities of different government departments and raise issues pertaining to those in the Assembly, a party release said Wednesday.

The Biju Janata Dal has 51 MLAs, including Patnaik, in the 147-member Assembly in the eastern state.

"The BJD president has allotted different departments to various MLAs for close monitoring, interventions in Assembly and other issues relating to the department concerned," the party release said.

Stating that Opposition works as a watchdog for public interest in a democracy, it said that by

keeping a close watch on the performance of various departments of the state government and actively participating in the discussions related to them in the Assembly, it can help protect the rights of the people of the state.

Patnaik has for the first time become the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly.

The first session of the 17th Odisha Legislative Assembly is scheduled to commence July 22 with Governor Raghubar Das's address. The Budget for the 2024-25 fiscal will be presented July 25.

The BJP has formed the government in the state by winning 78 seats in the 147-member Assembly, while the BJD bagged 51 seats, the Congress 14, the CPI (M) one. Three Independent candidates also emerged victorious.

## SCBMCH stalemate resolved

PNN & AGENCIES

**Cuttack, July 17:** The conflict between house surgeons and nurses of SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) here was sorted out Wednesday evening and normal services would resume, an official said.

Earlier in the day, services were partially disrupted at the hospital as around 250 house surgeons boycotted their general duties to protest against the alleged high-handedness of the nursing staff.



The arguments of associations of the house surgeons and nurses were later heard by a committee, chaired by Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Commissioner Bijay Kumar Dash.

It was decided that a departmental enquiry will be conducted and both sides agreed that they would resume their duties.

The delivery of patient care will function smoothly, said Jayanta Kumar Panda, a member of the committee.

He said all will cooperate to deliver the services smoothly.

The house surgeons were on strike, but they provided emergency services, according to SCBMCH superintendent Sudhansu Sekhar Mishra.

The conflict between house surgeons and nursing staff, which started Monday evening, escalated Wednesday when the house surgeons decided to launch an indefinite cease work.

## Nanhe Farishtey: 84,119 children rescued in last 7 years

According to East Coast Railway, around 3,894 children, including 1,112 girls, were rescued from its jurisdiction covering Odisha and some parts of Andhra Pradesh as well as Chhattisgarh

children in need of care and protection across various Railway Zones, according to the ministry. "During last seven years (2018-May 2024), the RPF has rescued 84,119 children who were at risk in stations and trains, preventing them from falling into harm's way," the ministry said.

"Nanhe Farishtey is much more than just an operation; it is a lifeline for thousands of children who find themselves in precarious situations. The data from 2018 to 2024 illustrates a story of unwavering dedication, adaptability, and resilience. Each rescue is a testament to the RPF's commitment to safeguarding the most vulnerable members of society," it added.

Giving year wise data, the ministry said, the year 2018 marked a significant start for Nanhe Farishtey and in the same year, RPF had rescued a total of

17,112 children, including both boys and girls.

"Out of 17,112 children rescued, 13,187 were identified as runaway children, an alarming number of 2,105 were found to be missing, 1,091 children as left behind, 400 as destitute, 87 as kidnapped, 78 as mentally challenged and 131 as street children. The year 2018 set a strong foundation for the operation, highlighting the urgent need for such an initiative," the ministry said.

"During 2019, efforts continued to bear fruit, with a total of 15,932 children were rescued out of which 12,708 as runaway children, 1,454 as missing, 1,036 children as left behind, 350 as destitute, 56 as kidnapped, 123 as mentally challenged and 171 as street children. The consistent numbers showcased the persistent issue of children running away and in need of protection," it added.



According to the ministry, 2020 was challenging due to the Covid pandemic, which disrupted normal life and significantly impacted the operations.

Despite these challenges, RPF managed to rescue 5,011 children, it added.

"During 2021, RPF saw resurgence in their rescue operations, saving 11,907 children among

which 9,601 children identified as runaways, 961 as missing, 648 as left behind, 370 as destitute, 78 as kidnapped, 82 as mentally challenged and 123 as street children," the ministry said.

Lauding the RPF, the ministry stated that during 2022, RPF's unwavering commitment was evident as they rescued 17,756 children, the highest in the recorded period.

It said, "The year 2022 saw a significant number of runaways and missing children being found and given the necessary care and protection. 14,603 children were identified as runaways, 1,156 as missing, 1,035 as left behind, 384 as destitute, 161 as kidnapped, 86 as mentally challenged and 212 as street children. The efforts were bolstered by increased awareness and more coordinated operations across the railway zones."

"During the year 2023, RPF managed to rescue 11,794 children. With 8,916 children rescued as runaways, 986 as missing, 1,055 as left behind, 236 as destitute, 156 as kidnapped, 112 as mentally challenged and 237 children as street children, the RPF continued to play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable children," it added.

Highlighting the persistent issues of child runaways and the dedicated efforts of the RPF to address them, the ministry maintained that in the first five months of 2024, the RPF has already rescued 4,607 children.

"Through their efforts, the RPF has not only rescued children but also raised awareness about the plight of runaway and missing children, prompting further action and support from various stakeholders," the ministry added.



**RHYTHMIC MOVE:** Artistes perform on concluding day of 38th Shradhanjali Samaroha of Guru Deba Prasad Das organised by Tridhara at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

# Heavy rainfall likely in state from July 19: IMD

**CAPITAL MAY EXPERIENCE CLOUDY SKY WITH POSSIBILITY OF MODERATE RAIN OR THUNDERSHOWER DURING THE NEXT 24 HOURS**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The state is expected to experience a heavy rainfall from July 19 onwards due to the likely formation of a fresh low-pressure area over west-central Odisha and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal (BoB), India Meteorological Department (IMD) bulletin said Wednesday.

IMD regional centre, in a press release, said, "A fresh low-pressure area is likely to form over west-central and adjoining north-west BoB around July 19."

Meanwhile, rain may occur at one or two places in Koraput, Rayagada and Gajapati districts July 17. Light to moderate rain or thundershower is also likely at many places in South Odisha and at a few places in the north-

ern districts of the state, IMD said.

Bhubaneswar may also experience cloudy sky with possibility of moderate rain or thundershower during the next 24 hours, the weather bulletin said.

July 18, heavy rain is likely at one or two places in Gajapati, Ganjam, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Koraput and Malkangiri districts, it said.

The weather agency has forecast heavy to very heavy rain at one or two places in Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Koraput and Rayagada and heavy rain at one or two places in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Puri, Khurda, Jajpur, Malkangiri and

Nabarangpur July 19.

It has also predicted that July 20, heavy to very heavy rainfall may continue at one or two places in Koraput, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur districts. Heavy rain may also lash at one or two places in Gajapati, Nuapada, Puri, Khurda, Cuttack, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Bhadrak, Angul, Dhenkanal, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Bolangir, Ganjam and Nayagarh districts.

Rainfall activities in the state had intensified after formation of a low-pressure area north-west of the west-central BoB, off the South Odisha coast July 15. The system now lies over southeast Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring Chhattisgarh.

# Govt dissolves State Planning Board

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The state government has dissolved the State Planning Board with immediate effect, official sources said Wednesday.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has approved the proposal for dissolution of this planning body, an official release from the CM's Office said.

The dissolution of the board, which came over a month after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in the state, will pave the way for formation of a new planning board, official sources informed.



Sources said the decision was long-pending as the last State Planning Board meeting was

convened October 15, 2007, under the chairmanship of former chief minister Naveen Patnaik.

The objective of the board was to provide short and long-term policy guidelines for districts and the state.

Official sources said that the planning board headed by former CM Naveen Patnaik had met thrice i.e. May 9 and August 9, 2003 and October 15, 2007.

As per official resolution issued July 27, 1998, the chief minister or his nominee will head the board, while a Cabinet minister is supposed to hold the deputy chairman's post. Besides, the board will have five official and

ten non-official members, sources said.

"The departmental minister, chief secretary, additional chief secretary and finance secretary are to be ex-officio members of the planning body while the development commissioner has been appointed as the member secretary" quoted sources.

Besides, two non-official members are to be nominated from among eminent academics, economists, scientists, and technical experts. Also five members are to be selected from among social activists, industrialists, and from among MLAs, sources claimed.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Notary Public, Bhubaneswar, dated 15.07.2024, I Dillip Kumar Sahoo, Address - Bhadikila, Baunshagadia, P.S. - Odagaon, Dist - Nayagarh, declare that, I have changed my son's name from Suvam Sahoo to Suraj Kumar Sahoo. Henceforth, he shall be known as Suraj Kumar Sahoo for all purposes. Dillip Kumar Sahoo

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Loisingha, I Jhasanetri Chuhan, W/o Durgaprasad Chuhan, R/O- Village - Bhalupali, P.O.- Badibahal, Dist.- Balangir, Odisha declare that after marriage I have changed my name from Kousalya Mahala to Jhasanetri Chuhan. that both the names belong to one and same person.

I, Abhiram Nayak (41), Rank- Naik No. 14667678N, S/o- Gopal Nayak, Vill.: Chasakhanda, P.S.: Chandbali, Dist.: Bhadrak, Odisha. My wife's name is Subhrarani Biswal mentioned in all of essential identity proof issued by the concerned authority. But in my service record my wife's name has been mentioned as Subhrarani Nayak instead of her correct name Subhrarani Biswal. By virtue of this affidavit kindly allowed to my wife's correct name in my service record.

## BMC in action after min's visit

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The recent visit of Housing & Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra to various areas within the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has spurred immediate and impactful actions.

Following his directives, officials have swiftly initiated repair works, notably in the Laxmisagar area.

Street lights, for instance, were promptly restored and are now fully operational since last night. In response to public demand, the Minister also prioritised the urgent repair of roads near the Fishery Tank. The BMC's engineering team, supported by dedicated masons, labourers, and machinery, got engaged in laying WMM (wet mix macadam) to ensure durable repairs.

The efforts are slated for completion within a stringent timeline, covering approximately 400-500 meters of road overnight.

Mahapatra also conducted a thorough inspection of various water bodies under BMC's jurisdiction accompanied by Mayor Sulochana Das, MLA Babu Singh, local leader Jagannath Pradhan, BMC Commissioner Rajesh Pravakar Patil and Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) vice chairman Balwant Singh.

The minister's proactive approach has prompted BMC into swift action, demonstrating a keen responsiveness to community needs.



Man held for stabbing wife

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The Kharavela Nagar police here, Wednesday, arrested a man who was on the run since last year after allegedly stabbing his wife.

According to IIC of Kharavela Nagar police, Rajanikanta Mishra, the accused was identified as Deepak Sendre, 34, a native of Chhattisgarh. He works as a daily wage earner at a biscuit factory in the City. Mishra said the couple tied the knot in 2011 but soon their relationship soured as Deepak used to beat his wife over financial issues, "February 12, 2023, Deepak stabbed his wife following an altercation," Mishra said.

The police booked the accused under relevant Sections of IPC and produced him before a local court Wednesday.

## Man held for stabbing wife

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The Kharavela Nagar police here, Wednesday, arrested a man who was on the run since last year after allegedly stabbing his wife.

According to IIC of Kharavela Nagar police, Rajanikanta Mishra, the accused was identified as Deepak Sendre, 34, a native of Chhattisgarh. He works as a daily wage earner at a biscuit factory in the City. Mishra said the couple tied the knot in 2011 but soon their relationship soured as Deepak used to beat his wife over financial issues, "February 12, 2023, Deepak stabbed his wife following an altercation," Mishra said.

The police booked the accused under relevant Sections of IPC and produced him before a local court Wednesday.

# Olive Ridley art installation: A clarion call for conservation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, July 17:** A unique art installation of the Olive Ridley turtles on Puri beach has turned out to be a big draw as thousands of tourists are thronging the area to witness the 'wonder at the beach'.

Notably, the pilgrim town is already teeming with a rush of devotees owing to the world-famous Rath Yatra, and such a gathering of people has resulted in strong support for the cause of endangered Olive Ridley turtles.

The person, who designed the magnificent art installation on the beach, is Kirti Maharana, who had developed the Odisha tableau that bagged the first prize during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi this year.

The installation aims to raise awareness about the critical conservation efforts needed to protect these vulnerable creatures.

The 30-ft-long, 12-ft-high, and 20-ft-wide installation made of fibreglass seeks to bring the spotlight on the endangered Olive Ridley turtles, which face significant extinction threats due to limited nesting sites globally.

Kirti Maharana, the founder of the Bhubaneswar-based creative agency Imagery and the visionary artist behind the installation, says, "Through art, we can evoke emotions and inspire change. This installation is our heartfelt effort to draw attention to the endangered Olive Ridley turtles and the need to protect their nesting grounds, one of the rarest natural wonders of the world. It's a call for everyone to take responsibility for our environment."

It took 13 artists and sculptors seven days to make this 17-tonne installation made of fibreglass that will withstand the salty wind of the beach.



The 30-ft-long, 12-ft-high, and 20-ft-wide installation on Puri beach seeks to bring the spotlight on the endangered Olive Ridley turtles, which face significant extinction threats due to limited nesting sites globally

"While walking along the beach a few months back during a holiday, I came across the carcass of an Olive Ridley turtle being eaten by stray dogs, which moved me to think about what I can do to create awareness for

their conservation. What better time to start the initiative than during the world-famous Rath Yatra when lakhs of devotees from across the country congregate here? I hope the word will spread through my artwork so

The art installation is a powerful testament to the urgency of conserving our natural heritage. The Olive Ridley turtles are a symbol of resilience, and through this creative expression, we hope to inspire collective action to protect them

ARUN KUMAR MISHRA | FORMER CHIEF CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS, ODISHA

that I can contribute my bit to the conservation of this beautiful animal of Mother Nature," added Maharana.

Arun Kumar Mishra, noted conservationist and former chief conservator of forests, Odisha, who inaugurated the art installation, said, "This art installation is a powerful testament to the urgency of conserving our natural heritage. The Olive Ridley turtles are a symbol of resilience,

and through this creative expression, we hope to inspire collective action to protect them."

In 2002, the state government implemented stringent laws to prohibit trawling and the trade of turtles, preserving the state's natural heritage. Despite being protected under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, these turtles face grave threats, with high mortality rates due to fishery-related activities.

Maharana, through his organisation Imagery, is renowned for his vibrant contributions to art, culture, and heritage across India. His impactful social campaigns and distinctive initiatives have earned him recognition from prestigious national bodies and government entities. The Odisha pavilion conceptualised by Maharana at the India International Trade Fair at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi 2023 was awarded the best Pavilion by the Central Government.

## FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

# Mangrove plantation in Ganjam to tackle coastal erosion, storms



Berhampur Forest department has come up with the idea of planting mangroves to combat coastal erosion under Enhancing Climate Resilience of India's Coastal Communities (ECRICC) project. Observers claimed that if the project becomes successful, then it will prove to be a boon for the district.

Meanwhile, the Forest department has planted 15,000 mangrove saplings on six hectares of land at Purunabandha and Gokharkuda area under Khallikote forest range. The district will take up further plantation if this project becomes successful.

Here, the canal embankment is being made in fish bone style, work on which has started from this month. The single bonny saplings are growing well among the six varieties of mangrove saplings which can grow well in clay and sand mixed soil. The single bonny saplings can resist up to 40 PP, said Ranjan Kumar Bhoi, the district coordinator of ECRICC.

He said the saline water ingress to the area is more while fresh water is available during the rainy season. As a result, mangrove forests can grow well in this area, he said. The saplings will be brought from Balasore and Kendrapara. A 10-member team has undergone training on mangrove plantation in Kendrapara. A technical team from Rajnagar in Kendrapara also visited the area and took stock of the coastline and the mangrove plantation.

The climate of the district is conducive for mangroves and further plantation will be taken up at Sunapur and Bahuda seamouth if the project at Podampeta and Gokharkuda proves successful, they said.

cent of the farmlands were destroyed. The state government took a series of steps to compensate the district. However, the worst affected were the people living near the coastline. The scar left behind by Phailin is yet to be erased from the minds of the residents.

The cyclonic storms Titli, Hudhud and Fani, which occurred later, did not have any serious impact on the district. The district administration promptly evacuated the residents living near the sea and shifted them to safety as per the order of the state government. However, climate change has brought in a new threat for the district in the form of coastal erosion.

Erosion of coast at Podampeta in Ganjam block and at Sunapur in Chikiti block has posed serious challenge for the district administration. The coastal erosion has wrecked havoc at seaside Podampeta village where rising tidal waves have washed away several houses of the fishing community.

The district administration has rehabilitated the residents of Podampeta under Odisha Disaster Recovery Project (ODRP) but is yet to find any solution to protect the coast from erosion.

As the threat of coastal erosion looms large on the district, the

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, July 17:** With coastal erosion and natural calamities such as cyclones taking alarming proportions due to climate change, the Ganjam district administration has planned to take up mangrove plantations along the coast to combat this situation.

The southern district has faced several natural calamities in the past. The Super Cyclone of 1999 was the worst of them which brought severe devastation to the coastal districts of the state, especially Ganjam. While the wind speed was over 200 km per hour, the district received heavy rainfall of 194.72 mm for two days, October 16 and 17, before the cyclone made landfall October 29. The district further received heavy rainfall of 145.84 mm October 29 and 30 which destroyed the crops, houses and properties of the residents. As many as 176 people died and 402 persons were injured in this calamity. The district had pegged the loss at ₹1,066.59 crore and presented it before the state government which provided compensation for the loss.

Later, the cyclonic storm Phailin in 2013 also proved disastrous for Ganjam district as over, 90,000 houses and 50 per



**ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD:** Unabated dumping of solid and plastic waste on the roadside of National Highway-20 in Siddhamatha forest area has led to spread of environmental pollution posing threat to green cover and wildlife in the area

## Boudh cop arrested while smuggling ganja in Chh'garh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boudh, July 17:** A police officer from this district along with a driver was arrested by Chhattisgarh police while smuggling cannabis, sources said Wednesday.

The accused were identified as Gagan Meher, a traffic ASI currently posted at Purunakatak under Harabhanga block in this district, and the car driver Rabindra Bhukta, a resident of Salakata village under Harabhanga block.

According to sources, Meher was caught by Chhattisgarh police with 70 kg cannabis in the car. The car and the contraband were seized and both Meher and the driver were arrested. A case was filed and the duo was presented in court Wednesday.

Meher, who was recently pro-



moted and transferred to Angul district, was still involved in the cannabis trade which he was doing while serving as a traffic ASI in Boudh. This is the second case against him related to cannabis smuggling in Boudh. Intellectuals in the district said if law enforcers themselves are involved in the trade, the problem of cannabis smuggling will only worsen instead of being eradicated.

## RMC begins hearing of public grievances

**Rourkela:** Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) has begun its 'joint hearing of public grievances' where the Commissioner and ADM, Rourkela Ashutosh Kulkarni will be present. There will be a series of five more joint hearings in the coming days. The first such meeting was held for Ward No 13, 14 and 15 covering Chhend and Kalinga Vihar areas at the Mathusudan Bhawan Wednesday 8.30am. The Commissioner heard over 52 complaints. He was accompanied by joint commissioner Pallabi Nayak and assistant commissioner Amiya Kumar Pattnaik and other officials. The commissioner heard all the complaints and instructed the respective officials to complete those and inform him. "The commissioner instructed to take care of the complaints in a time bound manner and keep him informed on the developments," said one of the participants in the grievance hearing. There will be five more such meetings July 19, 23, 26, 30, and August 2 for various wards of the civic body.



## Man offers tongue to appease Goddess Tarini in Ghatagaon

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, July 17:** A 50-year-old man identified as Bijay Pradhan from Ganjam district cut his tongue with a sharp blade in front of the Maa Tarini temple at Ghatagaon in Keonjhar district to appease the deity in order to fulfill his wish.

The incident took place Tuesday evening at about 7.45pm. After the incident the servitors and temple employees noticed blood oozing out Pradhan's mouth. They immediately took him to Ghatagaon community health center for treatment.

According to the servitors, Pradhan told them that he is a devotee of Maa Tarini and has strong belief in her. This act was part of his puja. Sanjeev Mohapatra, secretary of Maa Tarini Trust Board said, "The devotee was admitted in the hospital for treatment. Later he left the hospital. We do not have more information about him."

Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Ghatagaon Pravat Tripathy said,



"No such complaint was received from anyone."

Many a time, devotees fall in trap of false rumours spread by some miscreants and adopt similar acts to supposedly please the deity to fulfill their desire, sources said.

## NHRC seeks ATR on murder of 3 tribal women in Jalanga

PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, July 17:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought for an Action Taken Report (ATR) from the District Collector and the Superintendent of Police of Bhadrak on murder of three tribal women in Jalanga village.

The NHRC passed the order Monday acting on a petition filed by human rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy.

Tripathy brought the notice of the commission to a shocking incident of murder of a minor tribal girl, rape and murder of her mother and subsequent murder of her grandmother in Jalanga village in Bhadrak district last month.

He said the local police had recovered the bodies near a farmland near Raibani Chowk. The petitioner stated that the mother and her daughter had gone to Bhadrak District Headquarters Hospital for treatment. The villagers suspected that the accused killed the woman after



sexually assaulting her and then strangulated the minor girl.

He further mentioned that the Reserve Bank of India has adopted Jalanga village as a model village under 'Samagra Gramin Vikas Yojana'.

Accordingly, the UCO Bank has adopted Jalanga village in December 2009 for the purpose of financial inclusion and financial literacy. However, the quality of life of the villagers is yet to be improved in Jalanga, Tripathy alleged.

The petitioner, requested the apex rights body to ensure justice in the instant case involving the horrifying incident of murder against the tribal women, and demanded an independent

and impartial investigation of the incident with legal action against the culprits.

He also urged the commission for psychosocial counselling with all rehabilitation measures to the surviving family members of the deceased victims.

Tripathy requested the NHRC to seek for a comprehensive report from the RBI on the achievements under the 'Samagra Gramin Vikas Yojana' to analyse the achievements in terms of quality of human rights of the villagers.

The NHRC transferred the petition to the Superintendent of Police, Bhadrak, to ensure needful action and ordered to submit action taken report in the matter to the commission within four weeks.

In addition, the NHRC also directed the District Magistrate, Bhadrak to see the issue of the overall development of Jalanga village, and submit an action taken report, including the steps taken under the 'Samagra Gramin Vikas Yojana', within four weeks.

## Devotees witness Suna Besa on tallest chariot



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, July 17:** Thousands of devotees from various parts of the state witnessed the Suna Besa (golden attire) of the Trinity -- Lord Baladev, Lord Jagannath and Devi Subhadra -- at the world's tallest chariot here, Wednesday.

Besides armed security forces, CCTV cameras installed at various places near the chariot kept a close watch on the precious ornaments

and law and order situation during the festival.

The deities wore valuable gold ornaments fixed with precious gem stones weighing around 16 kg during the festival, temple sources said. The deities were decked up with traditional gold ornaments donated by the former royals.

Mahendra Nath Murmu, Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Keonjhar said, "The Suna Besa was per-

formed with tight security with deployment of 14 platoon police forces. 12 CCTV cameras were installed and barricades placed around the chariot to help devotees witness the Suna Besa from a distance."

Retired professor Banabihari Mishra said, "The gold ornaments include donations made by the monarchy where the portrait of the royal family is engraved. The total cost of the ornaments is estimated

to be over ₹100 crore owing to its antiquity."

Devotees were allowed to witness the Suna Besa from 3pm till 10pm and no one was allowed near the deities.

"Earlier gold plated ornaments were being used for Suna Besa. But for the last seven years, Suna Besa is being held with real and antique gold ornaments," said Ramakanta Swain, principal of Pateswar Higher Secondary School.

According to historians, this event was resumed in the year 2009 after a lapse of about five decades. The last Suna Besa was conducted in 1961 in the presence of the last king of the then princely state of Keonjhar.

Sources said about 40 kg gold ornaments and other precious stone studded ornaments of the deities are kept in bank and treasury lockers.

The 16th century shrine of Lord Baladev was built by King Laxmi Narayan Bhanja Deo. The chariot of Keonjhar is said to be the tallest in the world at 72 feet height. Sources said a large amount of ornaments were stolen from the temple locker many years back. After the incident the ornaments were kept in a bank locker.

**INDIAN PORT RAIL & ROPEWAY CORPORATION LTD.**  
(A JV Company Under Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Govt. of India)  
CIN No. U63090DL2015PLC282703 (An ISO 9001, 14001, 45001 & 37001 Certified Company)

**INDIAN RAILWAYS PUBLIC NOTIFICATION REGARDING ENERGIZATION**

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway line and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of Bilaspur Division of South East Central Railway that, the 25000 volts, 50Hz, AC Overhead Trac tion wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date the Overhead Trac tion lines shall be treated as "LIVE" at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line.

SECTION	DATE
LOCM Siding line at IB Valley Area of MCL, taking off from Loc. No. LOCM-1/6(CH.: 1/160.00) near Brajrajnagar Station end to Loc. No. LOCM-3/7 (CH.: 3/540.50) at Lajkura end at IB Valley Area (RK.M-2.380, TKM-7.426) of Bilaspur Division of South East Central Railway.	23.07.2024

**INTRODUCTION OF AC 25 KV TRACTION "WARNING TO ROAD USERS"**

It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25 KV AC electric traction over the section of LOCM Siding line at IB Valley Area of MCL, taking off from Loc. No. LOCM-1/6(CH.: 1/160.00) near Brajrajnagar Station end to Loc. No. LOCM-3/7 (CH.: 3/540.50) at Lajkura end at IB Valley Area (RK.M-2.380, TKM-7.426) of Bilaspur Division of South East Central Railway, height gauges have been erected at all level crossings with clear height between 4.78m and above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire (contact wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5m above the rail level at level crossings. Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances. The dangers of load of excessive height are as follows:

- 1) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the Railway line.
- 2) Danger to materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself.
- 3) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Place: Lajkura  
Date: 16/07/2024  
Joint General Manager/Elect. IPRCL

**AU SMALL FINANCE BANK**  
Registered Office : 19-A Dhuleswar Garden, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, 302001.  
www.aubank.in

**LOAN AGAINST GOLD - AUCTION NOTICE ON "AS IS WHERE IS" BASIS**

The below mentioned borrower/s have been issued notices to pay their outstanding amounts towards the loan against gold facilities availed from AU Small Finance Bank Limited ("Bank"). Since the borrower/s has/have failed to repay his/his/their dues, we are constrained to conduct an auction of pledged gold items/articles on **23 Jul 2024 between 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM (Time)** at below mentioned branches according to the mode specified therein. In the case of deceased borrowers, all conditions will be applicable to legal heirs. Please note that in the event of failure of the above auction, the bank reserves its right to conduct another auction without prior intimation.

**E-Auction Branch Details (E-auction will be conducted by using Weblink https://gold.samil.in)**

**BHADRAK - 23660001830180 23660002189858 23660002289250 | HINJILICUT - 24660000635383 | JAIPUR - 24660000543995 2466000063689 | KJAKHIA - 24660000578979 24660000664207 |**

Note: The auction is subject to certain terms and conditions mentioned in the bid form, which is made available before the commencement of auction.

Sd/-  
Manager  
AU Small Finance Bank Limited

**यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India**  
ROURKELA MAIN BRANCH  
Rosy Shopping Centre, 1st Floor, Main Road, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundergarh-769001

**POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)**

**[RULE 8(1) OF SECURITY INTEREST ENFORCEMENT RULES - 2002]**

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India, Rourkela Main Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Second) Act, 2002 (Act. No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower(s)/ Co-applicant(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) in loan A/c mentioned below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest thereon within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower(s)/ Co-applicant(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/ Co-applicant(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower(s)/ Co-applicant(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Union Bank of India for an amount mentioned below & interest thereon. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.**

Name & Address of the Borrower(s)/ Co-applicant(s)/ Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s)	Liabilities due as per Notice (in ₹)	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of Secured Asset
<b>Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s):</b> 1) M/s. Kay Bee Sales & Service, (Represented by its Managing Partner: Mr. Tushar Kanti Das), of GC:120, New RCMS Complex, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundargarh, Odisha, PIN-769004. 2) Mr. Tushar Kanti Das, S/o.: Sri Rasamay Das, 3) Mr. Rasamay Das, S/o.: Late Pitambar Das, 4) Late Kishoribala Das, Since deceased, Represented by: 4a) Mr. Rasamay Das, S/o.: Late Pitambar Das, 4b) Mr. Tushar Kanti Das, S/o.: Sri Rasamay Das, all are Address: of E/L-100, Basanti Nagar, Udit Nagar, Rourkela(m), Sundargarh, Odisha, PIN-769012, 4c) Mrs. Tapashi Ghosh Maulic, D/o.: Sri Rasamay Das of Flat No.: 516, 5th Floor, Jagannath Avenue, Jagannath Nagar, Jharapada, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, PIN-751006	₹ 67,41,373.03 + Interest thereon	28.03.2024 16.07.2024	1) Land measuring area of 1200 Sq.ft with three storied residential building having plinth area of 1200 Sq.ft each Floor bearing house No. E/L 100, Plot No.: 103, Holding No.:7, Mouza: Durgapur, area No.: 17, Tahasil: Panpose, situated at Basanti Colony, Rourkela, Sundargarh, Odisha-769012, belonging to Late Kishoribala Das, and bounded by North: 20ft. wide Road, South: Plot No.: E/L-109, East: Plot No.: E/L 101, West: 25ft wide Road. 2) Land measuring Area Ac. 0.040 decimal bearing Plot No. 300/1488, Khata No.: 192/141, Major Settlement Khata No.: 76, Kissan: Gharabari-I, situated at Rourkela Town Unit No. 40, Tahasil: Panposh, Rourkela, Sundargarh, Odisha, belonging to Mr. Rasamay Das bounded by North: Plot No.: 300(p), South: Road, East: Plot No.: 300(p), West Plot No.: 300(p)

Place: Rourkela  
Date: 17.07.2023  
Sd/- Authorised Officer  
Union Bank of India

FOCUS G20

# THE BRAZILIAN TWIST



Led by Brazil and endorsed by several other countries, notably France, Germany, South Africa and Spain as well as by the IMF – the agenda has gained momentum and become a rallying cry that India will find hard to ignore

Brazil has fired up the G20 with a sharp focus on wealth inequality within a few months of taking the presidency of the influential grouping from India in December last year. Led by Brazil and endorsed by several other countries, notably France, Germany, South Africa and Spain as well as by the IMF – the agenda has gained momentum and become a rallying cry that India will find hard to ignore. Just last week (10 July), nineteen former Heads of State and Government wrote a letter to G20 leaders calling upon them to back the Brazilian G20 presidency's proposal for a new global deal to tax the world's ultra-rich individuals.

wealthy, with so much money flowing across the Atlantic, and for so many people to be hungry." The "Brazilian twist", as it has been called, is in sharp contrast to the Indian Presidency of the G20, which closed with the New Delhi Leaders Declaration in Sep. 2023, a 37-page document where inequality is mentioned twice, without actionable steps. A 171-page e-book, "The Grand Success of G20 Bharat Presidency: Visionary Leadership, Inclusive Approach", issued by The Research and Information System for developing countries, which includes government functionaries as contributors, also offers limited two mentions on poverty, one of them speaking only with respect to Africa.

In contrast, barely four months into the Brazilian presidency, the finance ministers of Brazil, Germany, South Africa and Spain wrote a joint editorial in the influential Guardian newspaper of the UK to argue for higher taxes on the super-rich as a key to battling global inequality and the climate crisis. The ministers asked that billionaires across international borders be made to pay a minimum 2% wealth tax as a step to "boost social justice and increase trust in the effectiveness of fiscal redistribution" and to "generate much-needed revenues for governments to invest in public goods such as health, education, the environment, and infrastructure – from which everybody benefits..."

This tax is being pushed as a globally agreed and coordinated minimum to plug loopholes and fix the problem of tax avoidance by the super-rich. The noted economist Gabriel Zucman of the Paris School of Economics and the University of California, Berkeley, who is advising the G20 on the proposal, wrote in the New York Times ("It's Time to Tax the Billionaires"): "In liberal democracies, a wave of political sentiment is building, focused on rooting out the inequality that corrodes societies. A coordinated minimum tax on the super-rich will not fix capitalism. But it is a necessary first step." This is the first time that the power of the G20, a grouping of 19 nations plus the African Union and the European Union (making a total of 21), is being used to stir up discussions on a coordinated wealth tax proposal, building on the lines of a similar global corporate minimum tax rate agreed by the OECD that takes effect this year across

135 member jurisdictions. As the OECD puts it: "The Global Minimum Tax (GMT) represents a major step forward in international cooperation on the taxation of multinational enterprises (MNEs). It will ensure that MNEs with revenues above EUR 750 million are subject to a 15% effective minimum tax rate wherever they operate." This is also the first time that proposals on taxing the super-rich are being endorsed by the IMF. The IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva has been quoted as saying that closing tax loopholes and ensuring that the richest paid their fair share would mobilise funds urgently needed for sustainable and inclusive growth. In September last year, she had asked Pakistan to increase taxes on the rich to protect the poor.

In India, the growing income and wealth inequality, now shown to be higher than it was at the time of India's Independence, was a hot political topic that the Congress hammered home to telling effect during the election campaign, and the BJP studiously avoided. The word "inequality" itself appeared eight times in the 48-page Congress manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections, titled 'Nyay Patra'. Most references talked about efforts to reduce wealth inequality, which was the theme of Rahul Gandhi's campaign. In contrast, the word "inequality" did not feature in the BJP's 76-page manifesto. The Congress has correctly asked the Prime Minister to take a stand on the new G20 focus. Will India support the global minimum tax on the super-rich, and thus be forced to introduce the provision in the Indian tax code? This is one global movement that will have important implications for Indian politics in the years ahead.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.

©THE BILLION PRESS



Jagdish Rattanan

WILL INDIA SUPPORT THE GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX ON THE SUPERRICH, AND THUS BE FORCED TO INTRODUCE THE PROVISION IN THE INDIAN TAX CODE?



Mattia Ferraresi

Alleging a connection between violence and political rhetoric becomes a rhetorical weapon itself, fueling the extreme polarisation that makes political violence more likely

The second, equally predictable effect is the accusation that Democrats are to blame for the attack. Senator JD Vance, Trump's vice-presidential pick, argued that the incident was a direct consequence of President Joe Biden's campaign portraying Trump as a threat to democracy, thus legitimising attempts to remove him by force. "That rhetoric led directly to President Trump's attempted assassination," Vance claimed. Similarly, US Representative Mike Collins suggested that the District Attorney's Office in Butler County, Pennsylvania, "should immediately file charges against Joseph R. Biden for inciting an assassination." Even Representative Steve Scalise, a victim of a 2017 attack by a left-wing extremist that the FBI classified as domestic terrorism, pointed to the Democrats' "incendiary rhetoric."

Meanwhile, Trump's campaign circulated clips of Democratic Representative Dan Goldman saying on live television that Trump needs to be "eliminated," a statement echoed by former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. And his operatives highlighted a now-ominous-sounding quote from a frustrated Biden, who, after his recent disastrous debate performance, said, "we're done talking about the debate. It's time to put Trump in a bullseye."

Democrats and their supporters have been hastily condemning the incident, while reminding everyone that Trump openly incited a mob to storm the US Capitol on 6 January, 2021 – the most horrific episode of political violence in recent American history – with the aim of overturning his loss in the 2020 election.

This rhetorical skirmish is likely to solidify Trump's lead over Biden in the polls, but the long-term implications are more devastating: a national conversation fueled by hatred, victimhood, and resentment. In 2011, after the assassination attempt on Representative Gabby Giffords in Arizona, a Democratic-leaning news outlet popularised the term "stochastic terrorism," which refers to political violence by lone actors motivated by a radicalising atmosphere. The stochastic terrorist was supposedly Sarah Palin, the former Alaska governor and then Tea Party leader, who had circulated a map marking congressional districts to be targeted in the next elections, including Giffords' district, with what looked like crosshairs.

It later emerged that Giffords' attacker was a deeply disturbed individual with no knowledge of Palin's map, rallies, or political debate. Despite this, and despite the lack of evidence of a causal link between political rhetoric and such attacks, the term resurfaces after every attack and has entered specialised literature as if it described a valid concept.

Through shared tactics of manipulation, instrumentalisation, and self-victimisation, Democrats and Republicans have become trapped in a mire of circular reasoning that is as perverse as it is dangerous. Alleging a connection between violence and political rhetoric becomes a rhetorical weapon itself, fueling the extreme polarisation that makes political violence more likely.

The writer is Managing Editor of the Italian newspaper Domani and a 2019 Harvard Nieman Fellow.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

## WISDOM CORNER

- Don't gain the world and lose your soul; wisdom is better than silver or gold. BOB MARLEY
- Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans. JOHN LENNON
- A hero is someone who understands the responsibility that comes with his freedom. BOB DYLAN

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1811: English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, who was best known for Vanity Fair (1847-48) and The History of Henry Esmond, Esq. (1852), was born in India.
- 1817: The English novelist Jane Austen, who wrote such classics as Sense and Sensibility (1811) and Pride and Prejudice (1813), died in Winchester, Hampshire, at age 41.
- 1925: The first volume of Mein Kampf, the political manifesto written by Adolf Hitler that became the bible of Nazism in Germany's Third Reich, was published this day in 1925, and two years later the second volume appeared.
- 1944: Allied forces captured the French town of Saint-Lô, a vital communications centre, during World War II.
- 1976: For her performance in the uneven parallel bars at the Olympic Games in Montreal, Nadia Comăneci of Romania became the first gymnast to be awarded a perfect score of 10 in an Olympic gymnastic event.

## SPECTRUM ORGANISATION

# Collaboration through cultural intelligence



Debabrata Dash

COLLABORATION ALLOWS ORGANISATIONS TO LEVERAGE THE COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF INDIVIDUALS OR TEAMS FROM DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES, DEPARTMENTS, OR GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

Organisations are increasingly emphasising on collaboration for several compelling reasons. Many of today's challenges are complex and multifaceted, requiring diverse perspectives and expertise to address these effectively. Collaboration allows organisations to leverage the collective knowledge and skills of individuals or teams from different disciplines, departments, or geographical locations.

Collaboration is a deeper form of interaction where individuals or groups actively work together, across organisational or disciplinary boundaries, to jointly create or achieve something that none could achieve alone. It emphasises mutual engagement, shared responsibility, and collective problem-solving. It involves pooling resources, expertise, and perspectives to generate new ideas, innovate, or tackle complex challenges. While cooperation is about sharing resources or efforts and coordination is about organising and aligning efforts, collaboration focuses on actively working together towards a common goal, often involving integration of diverse perspectives and contributions.

In global organisations, collaboration manifests in various forms, reflecting the intercon-

nected nature of modern business and the need to leverage diverse expertise across different locations. Several examples of collaboration in a global organisation include virtual collaboration platforms, cross-functional project teams, research & development initiatives, global marketing campaigns, supply chain collaboration, diversity and inclusion initiatives, learning & knowledge sharing platforms. These examples illustrate how collaboration in global organisations spans various functions, initiatives, and challenges, emphasising the importance of leveraging diverse perspectives and expertise to achieve common goals and drive organisational success on a global scale.

However, collaboration within organisations, especially in a global context, faces several challenges that can impact effectiveness and efficiency. These challenges include communication barriers, cultural differences, coordination across time zones, technological issues, lack of trust and relationship building, conflict management, roles and responsibilities ambiguity, organisational silos and resistance to change.

Addressing these challenges requires proactive measures such

as promoting cultural intelligence in the organisation. Cultural intelligence (CQ) refers to an individual's capability to function effectively in culturally diverse environments. It encompasses several key dimensions that enable individuals to interact and work with people from different cultural backgrounds sensitively, effectively, and respectfully. Cultural intelligence goes beyond mere awareness of cultural differences; it includes the ability to adapt behaviours, understand cultural norms and navigate cross-cultural interactions adeptly. The concept of cultural intelligence typically involves four main components or capabilities viz cognitive, emotional, behavioural and motivational.

Cognitive CQ involves knowledge about cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices of different cultures. It includes understanding how cultures vary in communication styles, decision-making processes and social norms. Emotional CQ relates to an individual's ability to manage and regulate emotions when interacting with people from different cultures. It involves being open-minded, curious, and empathetic towards cultural differences, and being able to adapt emotionally to unfamiliar cul-

tural contexts. Behavioural CQ refers to an individual's ability to adapt verbal and non-verbal behaviour appropriately in cross-cultural interactions. It includes adjusting communication styles, gestures, body language, and etiquette to effectively communicate and build rapport across cultures. Motivational CQ relates to an individual's willingness and confidence to engage with diverse cultural settings. It involves being proactive in seeking cross-cultural experiences and demonstrating a genuine interest in learning from different cultures.

Examples of cultural intelligence in action include understanding cultural norms, adapting communication styles, respecting time zone differences, building trust and relationships beyond work discussions, handling conflicts effectively through open dialogue leading to mutually acceptable solutions.

By integrating cultural intelligence into organisation practices, leaders can leverage cultural diversity as a source of strength, innovation, and competitive advantage.

The writer is a senior human resource professional.

## Invincibility missing

Sir, Novak Djokovic has been humbled by a much fitter and agile Carlos Alcaraz in the Wimbledon men's singles finals. The Serb was nowhere near his best at the centre court on last Sunday. And it showed against Alcaraz who literally bulldozed his way through the match to retain his title. The 37-year-old Djokovic seemed clueless against a player who does not seem to put a foot wrong on grass at the moment. Never did Djokovic provide even a glimmer of hope to his countless fans; he came close to doing so in the third set tie breaker but it proved just to be a flash in the pan. By the look of things, however, Djokovic is far from finished although in the post-match press conference he was not exactly his usual self. He may still win tournaments but that near invincibility looks missing.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

## In NATO's crosshairs

Sir, The recent NATO summit marked a significant shift in the alliance's focus, with China emerging as a major point of concern. The joint communiqué issued by NATO leaders condemned China's support of Russia in the war in Ukraine, highlighting the provision of dual-use goods and electronics as a key concern. This explicit language marked a departure from previous statements, which had only vaguely referenced China's role in the conflict. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg emphasised that China's actions were enabling Russia's aggression in Ukraine, and urged Beijing to cease its support for Moscow's military efforts. The communiqué also expressed concern about China's growing military presence and aggressive behaviour in the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the need for a united response to these challenges. The summit also saw NATO leaders meet with representatives from like-minded countries, including the European Union, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand. These discussions focused on cooperation in areas such as cyber-security, disinformation, and emerging technologies, reflecting the evolving nature of security threats in the 21st century. China's response to the communiqué was swift, with a foreign ministry spokesperson dismissing the allegations as "obvious lies and smears."

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

## 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

Orissa POST  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

TERRORISED VALLEY

# Cong to protest 'growing' J&K unrest

A series of attacks by terrorists in Rajouri, Poonch, Reasi, Udhampur, Kathua and Doda districts in the Jammu region this year claimed 22 lives

taken to the district and block levels in the coming days."

"We will also press for the restoration of statehood before the Supreme Court's September 30 deadline for the holding of Assembly elections," Wani told reporters here.

Criticising the BJP for "destroying the historic state" over the last 10 years of its rule at the Centre, Wani said Jammu was cleared of militancy during the Congress-led UPA government but the BJP has completely failed to provide security to the people who are gripped by fear due to the revival of terrorism.

"When they (BJP) were out of power before 2014, they were asking Congress that you have an army, paramilitary and police and why you are not able to wipe out terrorism. Today, I am asking the same question as terrorism is back in Jammu region," he said.

While campaigning for the



## Strict vigil by Village Defence Guards

**Doda:** Dozens of Village Defence Guards (VDGs), armed with .303 rifles, are helping security forces in the Desa forest of Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district in their search for the terrorists who killed four soldiers Monday night. The VDGs have vowed not to let the terrorists escape the area, but say their slower bolt-action weapons must be replaced by more sophisticated automatic rifles to counter the heavily armed ultras. The groups, earlier known as Village Defence Committees (VDCs), comprising 10-15 members, were formed in the Jammu region in 1995 to offer self-defence capabilities to villagers in view of terror threats. Sudarshan Singh, a member of a VDG group patrolling the Gai and the Banda areas to hunt down the terrorists linked to the banned Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) said the .303 rifle is no match for an automatic weapon. "We know the topography of the area and need automatic weapons to counter terrorists who are equipped with the most sophisticated weapons like the US-made M4 carbine," he said. "The government should frame a proper policy for us (VDGs). We want servicemen, whether from the army, police or the paramilitary forces, to head our groups." Sudarshan Singh said. In 2022, the policy for VDCs, which were headed by Special Police Officers (SPOs), was revamped by the Union home ministry and VDGs were introduced.

Lok Sabha polls that concluded recently, the BJP made tall claims about ending terrorism to mislead the people and get their votes, he said, adding that "nearly a dozen terror attacks have taken place in the Jammu region this year."

Congress wants terrorism to end so that the people of Jammu

and Kashmir can live in peace, he added.

The Congress leader also slammed the central government for giving more powers to the Lt Governor and said the BJP wants to continue its proxy rule even after the much-awaited Assembly elections.

"Giving powers to Lt Governor means rendering an elected government powerless. BJP has already destroyed this historic state by snatching our statehood, special status and other rights. They have failed to curb terrorism and are aware of losing the next Assembly elections," he said.

Senior AICC leader and in-charge of Jammu and Kashmir Bharat Singh Solanki said the Congress wants restoration of full statehood before the holding of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the Supreme Court set deadline.

"There is a difference between saying and doing in BJP. They are utilising power to remain in power so that they can exploit the people and the resources of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Solanki said 11 terror attacks in the past 78 days and the killing

# Omar hopes for full J&K statehood before elections

**THE FORMER CHIEF MINISTER, WHO WAS AT ZADIBAL TO TAKE PART IN A UHARRAM PROCESSION, SAID THE DANGER OF BEING A UNION TERRITORY IS THAT THE POWER DOES NOT LIE WITH THE PEOPLE**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



These are the dangers of being a UT. The power does not lie with the people. However, this is for a very short period as the PM and the home minister have assured that JK will get back the statehood soon after elections

OMAR ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE LEADER

**Srinagar, July 17:** National Conference leader Omar Abdullah Wednesday said the Centre should restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir before the Assembly elections as the union territory has failed on all fronts, including combating terrorism.

"We would hope that the statehood is restored to Jammu and Kashmir before the elections because the UT has failed... It has failed in Jammu, it is failed against militancy, it has failed in development. It has failed in every aspect," Abdullah told reporters here.

Replying to a question, the former chief minister, who was at Zadibal to take part in a Muharram procession, said the danger of being a union territory is that the power does not lie with the people.

"These are the dangers of being a UT. The power does not lie with the people. However, this is for a very short period as the PM and the home minister have assured that JK will get back the statehood soon after elections," he said while commenting on the recent notification which vested several pow-

ers with the LG.

On the attack in Doda, Abdullah said that it was not happening for the first time.

"The truth is that for past one year, a series of attacks have taken place in the Jammu region. Perhaps there is hardly any area in Jammu which is free of militancy. Attacks have taken place in Pir Panjal region, Chenab valley, Jammu, Kathua and Samba," Abdullah said.

"If our information is correct, 55 soldiers and security forces personnel have laid down their lives in the past one year in these attacks. In such a situation, we are compelled to ask what is the government doing," he added.

Abdullah said the government was making claims of militancy being on its last legs but the ground situation did not bear it out.

## Protests across J&K demand launch of 'Operation All Out'

**Jammu:** Several parts of the Jammu region witnessed protests Wednesday following the killing of four Army personnel in an encounter with the terrorists in Doda district and demanded the launch of 'Operation All Out' for a robust government response. Led by Rashtriya Bajrang Dal chief Rakesh Kumar, the activists rallied against the killings and Pakistan's alleged support for terrorism in the region. They burned effigies and chanted slogans condemning Pakistan. "We strongly condemn this cowardly act. The government must launch 'Operation All Out' to eliminate foreign mercenaries targeting army personnel and civilians," Kumar told reporters here. The encounter, which began Monday evening, marked the third major clash between the security forces and terrorists in the forests of Doda district in the past three weeks. Captain Brijesh Thapa, Naik D Rajesh, Sepoy Bijendra and Sepoy Ajay lost their lives in the encounter. In Samba and Rajouri districts, the Congress and Youth Congress units respectively staged anti-Pakistan protests, urging the government to initiate decisive anti-terrorism operations and restore confidence among the local population. They also demanded assurances for the safety of minorities in the Valley. In Doda and Baderwah, the traders and civil society members also held similar protests, burning effigies of Pakistan and calling for 'Operation All Out' against terrorism. They also advocated for equipping village defence groups with modern weapons to protect remote hamlets in the Jammu hills. Expressing their discontent, the workers from Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal protested the Doda terror attack, lamenting security breaches reminiscent of the 1990s. They urged the government to take stringent action against Over Ground Workers (OGWs) involved in facilitating terrorist activities.



## Over 3.38 lakh perform Amaranth Yatra in 18 days

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jammu, July 17:** Over 3.38 lakh devotees have performed the ongoing Amarnath Yatra so far as another group of 3,740 pilgrims left for Kashmir Wednesday amid tight security.

Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) officials, who manage the affairs of the annual Yatra, said that over 3.38 lakh devotees had 'darshan' inside the holy cave shrine during the last 18 days since the Yatra started June 29.

"Another group of 3,740 Yatis left Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu today morning in two escorted convoys for the Valley. Of these, the first escorted convoy carrying 1,435 Yatis in 55 vehicles left at 3.05 am for the North Kashmir Baltal base camp. The second escorted convoy carrying 2,305 Yatis in 72 vehicles left at 3.55 am for the South Kashmir Nunwan (Pahalgam) base camp," officials said.



For the first time since this year's Yatra started, authorities are using a novel 'Pony ambulance service' to treat sick Yatis.

In this novel emergency service employed on both Baltal and Pahalgam Yatra tracks, ponies are used to carry pilgrims falling sick due to high altitude sickness or other health emergencies.

Authorities said that using this 'ambulance service', Health department doctors and paramedics have so far successfully treated 1,200 patients on the twin Yatra routes.

The cave shrine houses an ice stalagmite structure that waxes and waxes with the phases of the moon. Devotees believe that this ice stalagmite structure symbolises the mythical powers of Lord Shiva.

The cave is situated at an altitude of 3,888 metres above sea level in the Kashmir Himalayas. Devotees approach the cave shrine either from the traditional South Kashmir Pahalgam route or the North Kashmir Baltal route.

## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

# MTDC cuts carbon emission in Ganpatipule resort

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, July 17:** The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has reduced carbon emissions at its resort in Ganpatipule with steps like use of natural products, waste management and ban on plastic bottles, officials said Wednesday.

A pilot project was taken up at the Ganpatipule resort, located in Ratnagiri district of Konkan region, as part of the MTDC's 'responsible tourism' programme, they said.

Taste enhancers, preservatives and artificial flavouring have been prohibited and they have been replaced with natural products in the resorts. The policy of no flex use and banning plastic bottles have also been implemented in the resorts, MTDC General Manager Chandrashekhar Jaiswal told PTI.

"We now don't change bed-sheets until a tourist asks for it, there is cent per cent waste management, food quantity management, water usage reduction and maintenance of air conditioners temperature at 24 degrees Celsius in our resorts," he said.

"The carbon footprint in the



Ganpatipule resort has come down to 0.858 kg CO2 per traveller per day now from 2.057 two years back. We have made an online form and collected data (of activities at the resort) from nearly 450 guests till date," Jaiswal said.

The carbon footprint calculation system has been installed at the MTDC resorts in Ganpatipule and Tarkarli.

"Responsible tourism" is an endeavour to create awareness among guests for environment conservation and an effort to use local produce. We are making our visitors understand carbon literacy Initiatives like no use of artificial colours and community-based tourism are making a positive impact, state tourism secretary Jayashree Bhoj said.

## MUKHYAMANTRI MAJHI LADKI BAHIN SCHEME

# First instalment during Rakshabandhan

Under the scheme, married, divorced and destitute women in the age group of 21-60 will receive ₹1,500 per month, with the annual family income of beneficiaries capped at ₹2.5 lakh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gadchiroli, July 17:** The first instalment under Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin scheme will be released during Rakshabandhan next month, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Wednesday.

Fadnavis, along with Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, was in the district here for the foundation stone laying ceremony for Surjagad Ispat Private Limited.

"We are working towards releasing the first instalment under Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin scheme during the Rakshabandhan festival from August 15 to August 19," Fadnavis informed mediapersons after attending the event.

Under the scheme, married, divorced and destitute women in the age group of 21-60 will receive ₹1,500 per month, with the annual



family income of beneficiaries capped at ₹2.5 lakh.

Rakshabandhan festival will be celebrated here August 19.

Against the backdrop of the Opposition's demand to extend the cut-off date for registration of names for the financial assistance scheme beyond July 15, Fadnavis said applicants who submit the forms by August 31 would receive the instalments for July and August next month.

"We will ensure that no one is left out from the scheme's ambit," he added.

Fadnavis highlighted the potential of the district, part of which is affected by Left Wing Naxalism, stating that the district would contribute towards 30 per cent of finished steel production in Maharashtra due to significant investments.

He said the upcoming inte-

grated steel plant at Vadlapeth, with an investment of ₹10,000 crore, will generate employment for 7,000 people.

"The project will have a capacity of 8 million tonnes of steel production. Similarly, the Lloyds Steel plant here will have a 12 million tonne steel production capacity," Fadnavis added.

He mentioned an upcoming ₹35,000 crore investment at Chamorshi in the district, which is expected to generate employment for 20,000 people.

"Gadchiroli district is changing fast and will be transformed from laggard to leading district in the state," Fadnavis added.

The scheme, announced by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Ajit Pawar in the state Budget recently, is being highlighted by the ruling allies— Shiv Sena, led by Chief

## Maha govt declares job training and stipend scheme

Pune: Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde Wednesday announced a job training and stipend scheme for youth, tentatively named 'Ladka Bahu' Yojana, days after it introduced a monthly financial assistance scheme for eligible women. Shinde declared broad features of the new scheme, primarily targeting men, at Pandharpur in Solapur district on the occasion of Ashadhi Ekadashi. "Some people said that 'Ladki Bahu Yojana' (for women) has been launched; what about 'Ladka Bahu' (beloved brother)? We are now announcing a scheme for Ladka Bahu where job seekers who are class 12 pass will receive ₹6,000, diploma holders will get ₹8,000, and those with a bachelor's degree will get ₹10,000. They will receive this stipend from the government during their on-job training in the industry," Shinde told reporters. The candidate will do the apprenticeship and get a job. Simultaneously, the industry will benefit from the trained manpower, he said, adding that the apprenticeship will be funded by the state government.

Minister Eknath Shinde, BJP, and NCP— as they prepare to contest the upcoming Assembly elections together.

# Shivaji Maharaj's 'wagh nakh' arrives in Mumbai

THE WAGH NAKH WILL NOW BE TAKEN TO SATARA IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA, WHERE IT WILL BE DISPLAYED FROM JULY 19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 17:** The 'wagh nakh' or tiger claw-shaped weapon used by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was brought to Mumbai from a London museum Wednesday, state Culture Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said.

This wagh nakh will now be taken to Satara in western Maharashtra, where it will be displayed from July 19.

"The wagh nakh has landed," Mungantiwar told PTI in response to a question, but did

not divulge any further details.

State Excise Minister Shambhuraj Desai Tuesday said the wagh nakh will be accorded a grand welcome in Satara.

The weapon brought from London has a bulletproof cover and security has been beefed up, he told reporters.

The weapon will be kept at a museum in Satara for seven months, he said.

Desai, who is also the guardian minister of Satara, reviewed the security arrangements at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Sangrahalay (museum) in the district Tuesday



"The wagh nakh is being brought to Shahunagari (Satara) from a London museum July 19," he said.

Desai said the wagh nakh

being bought to Maharashtra is an inspiring moment and it will be welcomed in Satara in a grand ceremony.

Mungantiwar said in the leg-

After a lot of efforts, the wagh nakh is being brought to Maharashtra due to successful efforts of the government led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde

SHAMBHURAJ DESAI | STATE EXCISE MINISTER, MAHARASHTRA

islative Assembly last week that the wagh nakh being brought to the state from London was used by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

He made the comments after a historian claimed the wagh nakh used by the Maratha empire founder to kill Bijapur

# national

## of the day quote

I come from Assam and demographic change is a big issue for me. Muslim population in my state is 40 per cent now, which was 12 per cent in 1951. It is not a political issue for me, but a matter of life and death

**HIMANT BISWA SARMA** | ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER

We are planning comprehensive development related to railway networking in Karnataka in general and the coast in particular

**V SOMANNA** | UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR RAILWAYS

In order to achieve global standards, our focus needs to be on transparency of procedures at CDSCO and within the drugs and medical devices industry

**J P NADDA** | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Navdeep Singh walks out of jail

**Ambala:** Farmer activist Navdeep Singh has walked out of Ambala Central Jail after the Punjab and Haryana High Court granted him bail in a case registered in connection with farmers' February 13 'Delhi Chalo' march. Navdeep Singh, who came out of jail late Tuesday evening, was honoured by various farmers' outfits on Shambhu border in Punjab Wednesday evening.

### Assam: 3 Hmar militants killed

**Silchar (Assam):** At least three suspected Hmar militants were killed and three police personnel were injured in a fierce encounter in Cachar district of Assam Wednesday, officials said. The deceased militants were part of a larger group, which was preparing to carry out "subversive activities" along the Assam-Manipur border areas, a senior police officer said.

### Five padayatra pilgrims killed

**Thanjavur (TN):** Five devotees, including a woman, on 'padayatra' were fatally knocked down by a speeding van along Thanjavur-Tiruchi national highway in the district early Wednesday. According to police, the victims hailing from Pudukottai district were proceeding to Samayapuram Mariamman temple by road when the accident took place. The van heading to Tiruchi mowed them down at Valambakudi village, 30 km from here, early this morning.

### Schools receive bomb threat e-mail

**Chennai:** A few private schools in the city received a bomb threat via email early Wednesday, police said and appealed to the public not to panic. A holiday was declared for two-three schools following an email that was received at around 1.55 am by the schools which come under the Foreshore Estate and Mylapore Police Station limits. A case has been registered and a probe was on, a police official said.

### Two gangraped

**Gorakhpur (UP):** Two women were allegedly raped by five men here, three of whom were arrested, police said Wednesday. Neeraj, Kallu and Ajay were arrested following an encounter, while two others, identified as Karamveer Nishad and Sant Nishad, are absconding, they said. The incident occurred Tuesday night.



I appeal to the prime minister to please stop making empty promises and diverting attention and think about the youth of the country. The promising youth, who are getting old, need crores of new opportunities

**PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA** | CONGRESS LEADER

## FLOOD SITUATION IN ASSAM IMPROVES

The flood situation in Assam continued to improve Wednesday, even as over 3.5 lakh people continue to be impacted by the deluge in 11 districts, an official bulletin said. According to the daily flood report of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), more than 3,55,400 people are affected in Cachar, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Kamrup Metropolitan, Karimganj, Nagaon, Nalbari and Sivasagar districts



# Haryana announces 10 pc quota for Agniveers in jobs

The Agnipath scheme, introduced by the BJP government at the Centre in June 2022 for short-term induction of personnel in the armed forces, has faced severe criticism from several quarters, including opposition parties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



tion for Agniveers," the Chief Minister said at a press conference here.

"If any industrial unit employs an Agniveer at a salary of more than ₹30,000 per month, then our government will give that unit an annual subsidy of ₹60,000," he said.

Saini also announced that if an Agniveer takes a loan of up to ₹5 lakh to start a business, no interest will be charged on it. He also launched an attack on the Opposition Congress and accused it of spreading "misinformation" about the Agnipath military recruitment scheme. "This scheme has been brought in public interest," Saini said.

He also announced that Agniveers will get arms licences on a priority basis. Agniveers seeking employment in government departments, boards or corporations will be given priority in the matrix score, Saini added.

The Agnipath scheme, introduced by the BJP government

# 'No need for Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, July 17:** Senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari Wednesday attributed the party's poor performance in Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal to lack of support from the minority community, asserting that 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' was unnecessary and proposing instead 'Hum unke saath jo humare saath' (we are with those who are with us).

Addressing the extended session of the BJP's state executive committee, Adhikari dismissed the need for the Minority Morcha of the party. The West Bengal BJP unit, however, distanced itself from Adhikari's comments as "personal remarks". "The party doesn't share his views," state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar said. Later, Adhikari claimed that his comments had been taken out of context and asserted that he embodies in letter and spirit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'.

While addressing the session, Adhikari said, "I have spoken for nationalist Muslims as well. We all used to say 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas', but I would not say this anymore because I think it should be 'Hum unke saath jo humare saath' (we are with those who are with us)... there is no need for Minority Morcha."

The minorities in West Bengal, constituting nearly 30 per cent of the electorate, helped TMC sweep minority-dominated pockets in southern West Bengal in the Lok Sabha polls, whereas the division of the community's vote between the Left-Congress alliance and the TMC in north Bengal helped the BJP score in several seats in the region, according to political observers.

"In West Bengal, free and fair elections are not possible. The Jihadi goons of the TMC will



In 2014, the BJP's slogan was 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', and in 2019, it was 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas'

Adhikari claimed that during the Lok Sabha polls, "Hindus were not allowed to vote by Jihadi goons of the TMC in many areas"

not allow it. Free and fair elections are only possible by implementing the Disturbed Areas Act in the state. We don't want to capture power in the state through backdoor implementation of the President's Rule. "We will come to power when we win elections with the people's mandate. But for that, free and fair elections have to be ensured," he said. Later, when his remarks triggered a controversy, Adhikari, in a post on X, said he doesn't believe in dividing people on the basis of majority and minority.

"Also, like Mamata Banerjee, we shouldn't divide people into majority and minority and see them as Indians. I embody in letter and spirit, the Prime Minister's call for 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'," he posted on X. While talking to reporters, Adhikari said his comments were not against any community. When asked about his remarks that the party should do away with the 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' slogan, Adhikari said his remarks were meant for "political reasons".

# 8 Indians among 9 rescued after vessel capsizes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 17:** Eight out of 13 Indians onboard a Comoros-flagged cargo vessel that capsized off Oman coast three days ago have been rescued, official sources said Wednesday.

The vessel MT Falcon Prestige had capsized July 14. Thirteen Indian seafarers were onboard the ship. Nine crew members from MT Falcon Prestige - eight Indians and one Sri Lankan - have been rescued during the search operations, the sources said.

The search and rescue operations to find the remaining crew members will continue in the area, they said.

The Indian embassy in Oman has been in contact with the authorities concerned in the Gulf nation, the sources said.

The vessel, MT Falcon Prestige, transmitted a distress call around 2200 hours July 14 off the coast of Oman, one of the sources said earlier.

The merchant vessel has a crew of 16, of which 13 are Indian seafarers, they said.

"Indian Navy has also joined the search and rescue operations," the source said.

## NEET 'PAPER LEAK'

### Patna court sends key accused to CBI custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 17:** A special court in Patna Wednesday sent the key accused in the NEET-UG paper-leak case, who allegedly stole the exam paper from a trunk of the National Testing Agency (NTA) in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh, to the CBI's custody for 14 days, officials said.

During its custody of accused Pankaj Kumar alias Aditya till July 30, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is likely to question him on his alleged role, his linkages with other gang members, the payments received and his local contacts who were involved in the entire theft process, the officials added.

Kumar's alleged accomplice, Raju Singh, was sent to the federal agency's custody for 10 days (till July 25) Tuesday. The CBI has arrested Kumar, a 2017-batch civil engineer from the National Institute of Technology in Jamshedpur, for allegedly stealing the NEET-UG paper from the NTA's trunk in Hazaribagh, the officials said.

Kumar, a resident of Bokaro, was arrested from Patna, they said. The agency also arrested Singh from Hazaribagh for allegedly helping Kumar steal the paper, they added.

Singh was arrested after detailed questioning, the officials said, adding that the agency has "temporarily sealed" the Raj Guest House in Hazaribagh in connection with the case.

## SNIPPETS

### Four die of electrocution, roof collapse across UP during Muharram processions

**Lucknow (UP):** Four people died and 26 injured in separate incidents while tazia processions were being taken out on Muharram Wednesday in Gonda, Pratapgarh, Ballia, Sant Kabir Nagar, and Kannauj districts, police said. In Gonda, a 12-year-old child was electrocuted to death and five others sustained injuries of current in separate processions. Another named Riyasat sustained burns in the same incident. Electrocution killed one and injured three in Bhatpur village in the Khalilabad Police Station area. In Kannauj in an area under the Sakrava Police Station jurisdiction, a child died and 14 injured when the roof of a house collapsed on the people gathered to watch the Muharram procession. In Bahraich, an interfaith clash broke out over route of the tazia procession.

### Gujarat reports first death due to Chandipura virus; infection suspected to have killed 13 others

**Ahmedabad:** The death of a four-year-old girl in Gujarat was caused by the Chandipura virus, a health department official said Wednesday citing a Pune-based virology institute's report, making it the first such fatality in the state, where 13 other patients are also suspected to have succumbed to the infection. So far, 29 suspected cases of the Chandipura virus, whose patients show flu-like symptoms, have been reported in Gujarat, the state health department said. "Of them, 14 patients have died. Their swab samples were sent to the Pune-based National Institute of Virology (NIV) for testing and confirmation of the Chandipura virus," the department said.



Muslims participate in an 'Ashura' procession during 'Muharram', the first month of the Islamic calendar in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

# Delhi govt must take blame for permission to fell 422 trees: SC

THE APEX COURT WAS HEARING SUO MOTU (ON ITS OWN) CONTEMPT PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) OVER ALLEGED CUTTING OF 1,100 TREES IN THE RIDGE FOREST FOR A ROAD WIDENING PROJECT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 17:** The Delhi government has shown lack of sensitivity over protecting the environment, the Supreme Court said while rapping it for granting permission to the Delhi Development Authority to chop 422 trees in the Southern Ridge's reserve forest area for the construction of a road.

A bench of justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said it is an admitted position as reflected in the statement made by the tree officer that for felling 422 trees, the officer did not grant any permission.

"The Delhi government must take the blame for granting permission to fell 422 trees, though

there was no statutory power vesting in the Delhi government to grant such permission," the bench said in an order dated July 12.

"Thus, apart from the trees in the ridge area, the government facilitated cutting and felling the trees outside the ridge area without permission under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994," it said. The top court said, like the DDA, the Delhi government has shown a lack of sensitivity over protecting the environment.

The bench said the Delhi government has not even provided the tree officer and the Tree Authority an office or basic infrastructure. The Delhi government must come before the



court and tell "how it will compensate for the damage caused to the environment due to its illegal acts", the bench said.

"The affidavit of the Delhi government also shows that this is not the only instance where the forest department of the Delhi government purported to grant permission for the felling of trees. They had done it earlier also," it said. The Delhi government's

stand is that "the DDA has accepted that they misread the notifications issued by the Delhi government", the bench said.

"That will not absolve the Delhi government of its responsibility of passing orders permitting the felling of trees, though no statutory power is vested in the Delhi government," it said. The top court said the Delhi government must also come out with an ac-

tion taken report, if any, against the erring officers who are alleged to have granted permissions for the felling of trees.

"Apart from a statement on oath which we expect the Delhi government to make about compensating the loss caused to the environment, we hope and trust that the Delhi government will immediately stop exercising the non-existent power of granting permissions for the felling of trees," it said.

The bench said, "While we do so, we direct the Delhi government to ascertain how many such permissions have been granted by the Delhi government in the last five years and place all those permissions on record."

During the hearing, the apex court expressed anguish over continuous "cover up" by authorities over the role of Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena in tree felling in the ridge area and directed the DDA to inform it whether the order to cut trees was passed on basis of the LG's oral permission or the DDA independently took the decision.

Senior advocate Aditya Sondhi, appearing for the Delhi government, assured the court that office infrastructure, staff and necessary hardware and software will be made available to the Tree Authority and the tree officer within six weeks.

The bench said, "The Delhi government shall also ensure that the Tree Authority is properly constituted before the next date. Regarding the forest department of the state government, the entire infrastructure must be put in place within two months from today."

"The Delhi government must file an affidavit indicating what measures the forest department is taking to prevent environmental damage, including keeping vigil to stop the illegal felling of trees," it said.

The court had earlier issued a notice of criminal contempt against DDA vice chairman Subhashish Panda for allowing large-scale felling of trees in the Southern Ridge's Satbari area to construct a road from Chhattarpur to the South Asian University.

# national

## of the day quote

If the JMM-led alliance returns to power again, the indigenous people of the state would become a minority. The demography of the state is changing due to infiltration from Bangladesh

I will also gather 100 deprived voters before the Raj Bhavan and expose how they were intimidated by TMC on the polling day before the media. They themselves will narrate their experiences

We should be sincere and serious enough about climate change to perceive its adverse impact not only on the present generation, but also on the generations to come

## X POST OF THE DAY

This is So Scary! I have received over 100+ msgs and emails from individuals and civil servants who have informed me about numerous officers creating fake disability and reservation certificates, along with proof. Currently, I have a list of 50+ officers, and the count is still increasing, who have been involved in this scam. Should I disclose this information?

## SHORT TAKES

**18-month-old dies in street dog attacks**  
Hyderabad: An 18-month-old boy died, while another boy suffered injuries when street dogs attacked them in separate incidents in Telangana, police said Wednesday. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy expressed anguish over the boy's death in Hyderabad and directed officials to take steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future. The boy died after allegedly being mauled by a pack of stray dogs at Jawahar Nagar in Hyderabad when he came out of his house Tuesday night.

**2 held with 7 kg heroin, 5 pistols**  
Chandigarh: Punjab Police Wednesday said it has arrested two persons with 7 kg heroin and five pistols. According to preliminary investigation, the accused were directly in touch with some Pakistan-based smugglers and were supplying consignments of weapons and drugs across the state after they were trafficked from across the border via drones, they added. A case has been registered against the accused under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and the Arms Act, it said.

**19-year-old held in Delhi hosp shooting**  
New Delhi: Delhi Police Wednesday arrested one more accused, who was among the key conspirators in the GTB Hospital firing case, officials said. According to the officials, the mastermind behind the incident, Faheem, had kept the accused Moim (19) as a backup plan in case the original plan failed.



**Holy Muharram teaches not to compromise with injustice. Let us all move forward on the path of peace and prosperity**  
MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

## RED ALERT STILL IN PLACE FOR COASTAL KARNATAKA

With the rains not letting up, and with the monsoon still vigorous, the India Meteorological Department has extended the red alert for coastal Karnataka till July 18. Since the intensity of rain has reduced in south interior Karnataka, the weather department has retracted the red alert for the region and has issued an orange one till July 20



# Kejriwal challenges arrest by CBI in HC

The excise policy was scrapped in 2022 after the Delhi lieutenant governor ordered a CBI probe into alleged irregularities and corruption involving the formulation and execution of the policy



Press Trust of India

New Delhi, July 17: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal challenged in the Delhi High Court Wednesday his arrest by the CBI in a corruption case stemming from the alleged excise policy scam and contended that it was an "insurance arrest" to ensure that he stays in prison. Justice Neena Bansal Krishna, who conducted the proceedings on a holiday on account of Muharram, heard the arguments advanced by the lawyers of Kejriwal and the CBI and reserved its order on the petitions challenging his arrest and seeking interim bail in the corruption case. The high court has listed his regular bail plea for further arguments July 29. The counsel for CBI opposed both pleas of Kejriwal and said that terming his arrest an "insurance arrest" was unjustified. Calling his arrest a "sham", Kejriwal's lawyer argued that the CBI did not want to arrest him and had no material to take him into custody, and the sequence of events made it clear that he was arrested to ensure that he remained in prison. Senior advocate Abhishek

Kejriwal was arrested by the CBI June 26 from Tihar Jail, where he is still lodged in judicial custody in a connected money laundering case filed by the ED

The chief minister, who was arrested by the ED March 21, was granted bail by the trial court in the money laundering case June 20

However, the trial court's order was stayed by the high court. The Supreme Court July 12 granted interim bail to Kejriwal in the money laundering case

Singhvi, representing the AAP national convener, contended, "It is unfortunately an insurance arrest. I have effectively three release orders in my favour (two from the Supreme Court and one from the trial court in the ED case) under very stringent provisions of the PMLA... These orders show that the man is entitled to be released." Asserting that Kejriwal was "not a terrorist" but the Chief Minister of Delhi, Singhvi said his arrest was not as per the mandate of the law and he was entitled to bail. "It is a rarest of rare case. He (Kejriwal) is already in custody in the ED case and CBI does nothing for the last one year and then suddenly arrests him," he argued, adding that those who are doing this want him to remain in custody by "hook or crook". Singhvi said Kejriwal's VIP status has made his situation worse than a common man and added that the Chief Minister's blood sugar levels were fluctuating. "It is a sham arrest, an insurance arrest, a non-necessity arrest which cannot be sustained," he argued and cited the case of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan. On the issue of not providing Kejriwal a notice before his arrest, Singhvi contended that the Delhi Prison Rules mandate seeking a court's permission to interrogate someone who is in the custody of the court.

# Big jolt to Ajit Pawar

Ajit Pawar's party suffered a major setback Tuesday when four of its top leaders from Pimpri-Chinchwad resigned and are set to join the Nationalist Congress Party led by veteran leader Sharad Pawar



AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 17: Spelling a setback for Nationalist Congress Party President and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, around two dozen office-bearers of Pimpri-Chinchwad hitched on to the Sharad Pawar-led NCP here Wednesday. A beaming Sharad Pawar personally welcomed the office-bearers, comprising 20 ex-municipal corporators including several women, to the NCP (SP) fold offering them the party flags, stoles and his blessings, in the presence of other party leaders at a small function held at his residence. Among the prominent ones who switched sides include the former NCP city president Ajit Gavhane, executive president Rahu Bhosale, student wing chief Yash Sane, Bhosari as-

sembly seat head Pankaj Bhalekar, and around 20 former municipal corporators and other unit heads. They had submitted their resignations to NCP state President Sunil Tatkare while Sane had sent in his papers to the NCP Student Wing President Prashant Kadam earlier this week and crossed over to the NCP (SP) Wednesday. The rattling development came ahead of Sharad Pawar's upcoming rally in Pimpri-Chinchwad Saturday (July 20), and more NCP leaders-office-bearers from other parts of Pune district are likely to follow suit, with the state Assembly elections barely three months away. Some of the office-bearers like Gavhane were reportedly peeved at not getting an NCP ticket for the Lok Sabha polls or lost all hopes for the upcoming Assembly elections from the NCP and hopped over to the NCP (SP), said a Pune leader.

# 12 Naxals killed in encounter with police in Gadchiroli

Press Trust of India

Gadchiroli, July 17: At least 12 Naxalites were killed and two security personnel injured in an encounter with police and commandos in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra near the Chhattisgarh border Wednesday, officials said. The heavy exchange of fire broke out in the afternoon between C60 commandos and Naxals in Wandoli village and continued for six hours, Gadchiroli Superintendent of Police Nilotpal said.



Police have recovered 12 bodies of Maoists from the spot besides seven automotive weapons, including 3 AK-47s, 2 INSAS rifles, a carbine and an SLR, he said.

One of the slain Naxals was identified as DVCM Laxman Atram alias Vishal Atram, in-charge of Tipagad Dalam. Maharashtra Home Minister Devendra Fadnis has declared a ₹51 lakh reward for C60 commando teams and Gadchiroli Police, Nilotpal said. Further identification of Maoists and area search is continuing. "The injured persons include a sub-inspector of C 60 and one jawan. They are out of danger, evacuated from the spot, and shifted to Nagpur," the SP added.

## Death is inevitable, says Bhole Baba

Lucknow: Self-styled godman Bhole Baba said Wednesday that he is very disturbed by the Hathras stampede but nobody can avoid what is destined and everyone has to die one day. "Honee ko kaun taal sakta hai (nobody can avoid what has to happen)," he told PTI Videos, a fortnight after 121 people died in a stampede at a 'satsang' held by him. "Jo aaya hai use ek din to jaana bhi hai, bhale hee koi aagey peechey ho," he added. Roughly translated, this means that everyone has to die one day, only the time is not certain. Bhole Baba, also known as Narayan Sakar Hari whose original name is Surajpal, also repeated the claim made earlier by him through his lawyer A P Singh that there was "conspiracy" behind the stampede. "After the July 2 incident, I was very depressed and disturbed. But nobody can avoid what has to happen... What my lawyer and eyewitnesses said about the poisonous spray is completely true, there has definitely been a conspiracy," he said.

## HATHRAS STAMPEDE

## SC to hear petitions relating to NEET-UG controversy today

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, July 17: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Thursday a batch of petitions related to the controversy-ridden medical entrance exam NEET-UG 2024 which was held May 5. According to the cause list of July 18 uploaded on the apex court's website, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra would hear more than 40 pleas, including those filed by the National Testing Agency (NTA) seeking transfer of cases pending against it in various high courts on the NEET-UG row to the Supreme Court to avoid multiplicity of litigations. The top court July 11 had adjourned till July 18 the hearing on the pleas.

# Monsoon to be active for next 5 days

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 17: India Meteorological Department (IMD) Wednesday said the monsoon is likely to be active in peninsular, and central India during the next 4 to 5 days bringing heavy rainfall in these regions. "Isolated extremely heavy rainfall very likely over South Interior Karnataka, Saurashtra and Kutch on 17th and 18th; Konkan and Goa, Coastal Karnataka 18th July and isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall during subsequent 3 days," the IMD said. The details of the IMD forecast are as follows: "Fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied with thunderstorms and lightning very likely over West and Central India, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka; isolated to scattered



light to moderate rainfall over Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Rayalaseema during next five days. \*Heavy to very heavy rainfall is very likely at isolated/some places over West Madhya Pradesh, Konkan and Goa, Madhya Maharashtra, Saurashtra and Kutch, Telangana, Coastal and South Interior Karnataka during the next five days. \*Isolated extremely heavy rainfall very likely over South Interior Karnataka, Saurashtra and Kutch on 17th and 18th; Konkan and Goa, Coastal

Karnataka 18th July. \*Isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over East Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat Region, Kerala, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and North Interior Karnataka during the next five days, Marathwada on the 17th and 20th. In East and Northeast India, fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms, and lightning is very likely over West Bengal and Odisha; scattered to fairly widespread light to moderate rainfall over Bihar, Jharkhand and Northeast India during the next five days. In Northwest India, scattered to fairly widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms & lightning very likely over Delhi, Haryana, Punjab Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan during the next five days.



A labourer carries children on a rickshaw cart in New Delhi

# Fight against child marriages shows significant progress

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT BY THE INDIA CHILD PROTECTION (ICP) RESEARCH TEAM WHICH WAS RELEASED BY CHILD RIGHTS BODY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR), 59,364 CHILD MARRIAGES WERE PREVENTED WITH THE HELP OF PANCHAYATS IN 2023-24

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, July 17: More than 14,000 child marriages have been prevented across 265 districts in 17 states and Union Territories by civil society, a report by an NGO said. The report said the Rajasthan High Court, in one of its judgments, held panchayats accountable for child marriage, which resulted in a significant decline in child marriage cases reported on Akshaya Tritiya. "Across India, 161 civil society organisations in 265 districts throughout 17 states and Union Territories successfully prevented 14,137 child marriages in 2023-2024 by using legal interventions and prevented 59,364 child marriages with the help of panchayats," the report said. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data shows that out of 63,513 children who were kidnapped or abducted and re-

covered in 2022, 15,748 (25 per cent) were kidnapped or abducted for the purpose of either 'marriage' or 'intercourse'. Of this, 15,142 children recovered in 2022 were kidnapped solely for the purpose of marriage. In 2022, 13,981 cases were reported for the offence of kidnapping of minor girls to compel them for marriage, compared to 11,236 in 2020. This highlights a 24 per cent increase in the number of minor girls being kidnapped or abducted for the purpose of marriage during 2020-22. In 2022, out of the total 3,563 child marriage cases listed for trial in courts under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, merely 181 cases were successfully concluded in terms of trial completion. This "slow" disposal rate has resulted in a persistently high pendency rate, which stands at 92 per cent. Despite the fact that there are



only 3,365 cases pending, with the current rate of disposal, the country may take 19 years to clear the backlogs as of 2022, it said. The conviction rate in cases filed under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act is an area of concern, given its "disheartening" statistics. In 2022, merely 11 per cent of these cases resulted in convictions, con-

trasting sharply with the overall conviction rate of 34 per cent for all crimes committed against children in that year, the report said. The ICP research team collected primary data from a sample of 1,132 random villages across 20 districts of Assam, encompassing a total population of 21 lakh and a child population of eight lakh.

The total number of child marriage cases registered during the last five years (3,863) is less than the number of girl child marriages taking place in a single day (4,442). On average, only one case of child marriage per district was registered for prosecution in 2022. The report said there was 81 per cent reduction in the instances of child marriage between 2021-22 and 2023-24. In absolute numbers, the incidents of child marriages in the study villages declined from 3,225 cases in 2021-22 to 627 cases in 2023-24. In 30 per cent of the villages surveyed in Assam, child marriage has been completely eradicated. Additionally, 40 per cent of villages reported a significant decline in child marriages. About 98 per cent of the respondents believed that the Assam government's strict law

enforcement initiatives in 2023 had a substantial and striking influence on the reduction of child marriages within their communities. The overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledged the effectiveness of stringent enforcement measures in curbing child marriages. In 12 districts, out of 20, over 90 per cent of respondents believe that taking legal action such as arresting individuals and filing FIRs in cases related to child marriage can effectively address this issue. Overall, the same percentage for all 20 districts stands at 72 per cent. This community validation reinforces the need for sustained and rigorous prosecution strategies to address and eliminate child marriage completely. The report recommended fast track special courts to be created to clear the backlog of child marriage cases.

# international

## of the day quote

We are the country where we can disagree like hell and still get together at the dinner table at the end of it. That is the America I know. That is the America we miss

**VIVEK RAMASWAMY** | FORMER REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, US

We don't have the luxury of delaying investment in new generation for another 15 or 20 years while we wait for a new form of generation that Australia has never had

**CHRIS BOWEN** | MINISTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY, AUSTRALIA

Orban met with Putin to denigrate the EU, to proclaim that he has a peace plan that nobody knows about, and to promote Russian expansionism

**IRATXE GARCIA PEREZ** | MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## SHORT TAKES

### Nepal new PM to seek vote of trust

**Kathmandu:** Nepal's newly appointed Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli will take a vote of confidence in Parliament July 21, as required by the Constitution, a media report quoted the chief whip of his party as saying Wednesday. The 72-year-old veteran leader was sworn in Monday as the Himalayan nation's Prime Minister for the fourth time. Prime Minister Oli decided to take a vote of confidence Sunday, MyRepublica news portal reported, quoting Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) Chief Whip Mahesh Bertaula.

### PIO killed in Oman mosque shooting

**Dubai:** An Indian national was among six people killed in a rare shooting attack by Islamic State militant group near a Shia Muslim mosque in Oman's capital. The shooting Monday night near the Imam Ali Mosque also claimed the lives of one policeman and four Pakistan nationals, while injuring 28 others. The three attackers were also killed by security forces during the incident in the al-Wadi al-Kabir area Monday night, according to a statement.

### Trump shooting: Iran rejects accusations

**Tehran:** Iran has rejected accusations regarding plots to assassinate former US President Donald Trump, while citing legal action for the 2020 assassination of a revered general by US drone, the state-run IRNA news agency reported Wednesday. IRNA quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani as saying Iran "strongly rejects any involvement in the recent armed attack on Trump or claims about Iran's intention for such an action." Thailand says cyanide killed 6 foreigners in hotel, including perpetrator.

### Cyanide kills six foreigners in Thai

**Bangkok:** Cyanide poisoning caused the deaths of six foreigners whose bodies were found in a room in a plush Bangkok hotel, Thai authorities said Wednesday, with the suspected killer among the dead. Traces of the rapid-acting, deadly chemical were found during autopsies of the bodies and on drinking glasses and a teapot in the room at the luxury Grand Hyatt Erawan hotel where the dead were discovered late Tuesday, according to police and a hospital.

## SOUTH CHINA SEA ROW

# Philippines, China crisis hotline

### BOTH THE COUNTRIES HAVE AGREED TO CREATE NEW COMMUNICATION CHANNELS TO BETTER MANAGE THEIR MARITIME DISPUTES

AGENCIES

**Manila, July 17:** The Philippines and China have agreed to set up new lines of communication to improve their handling of maritime disputes, according to a document and a Philippine diplomatic source, as ties sour over clashes about territory in the South China Sea.

The two countries have traded barbs repeatedly over jurisdiction in the contested South China Sea as the Philippines, emboldened by support of defence ally the United States, challenges China's permanent presence around strategic features inside Manila's exclusive economic zone.

Three communication channels would be established specifically for maritime issues, according to the source, who provided a document with highlights of an "Arrangement on Improving Philippines-China Maritime Communication Mechanisms", which was signed July 2.

"China has always been committed to working with the



Philippines to properly address maritime issues through dialogue and consultation," Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a briefing when asked about the agreement.

"The two countries have agreed to further strengthen the dialogue on sea-related communication between diplomacy and the maritime police, so as to jointly safeguard the stability of the maritime situation and the overall situation of China-Philippines relations," Lin added.

The foreign ministries of China and the Philippines and the Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond Wednesday to separate requests

Chinese counterpart guidelines to govern the implementation of the arrangement, which follows a June 17 clash between rival vessels near the Second Thomas Shoal, the site of frequent standoffs.

### CHALLENGE TO CHINA

The Philippines last month accused China's coast guard of intentionally ramming and deliberately puncturing navy boats and seizing weapons to disrupt a resupply mission to troops stationed on the vessel grounded at the shoal, seriously injuring a Filipino sailor who lost a finger.

China said the Philippine vessel had illegally intruded on its territory and had "deliberately and dangerously" approached a Chinese ship resulting in a slight collision.

The agreement on communications channels is not the first, with the two sides establishing a line between respective maritime offices.

Antonio Carpio, a former Philippine Supreme Court justice, and a prominent advocate of Manila's maritime claims, expressed scepticism over the communication lines "because that will not resolve the dispute."

"We don't know if they will answer when we call, so we will have to wait," Carpio said. "It is good to have that but we should not expect miracles out of that."

The Philippines and China agreed during the recent meeting on the need to "restore trust" and "rebuild confidence" to better manage disputes.

**We don't know if they will answer when we call, so we will have to wait. It is good to have that but we should not expect miracles out of that**

**ANTONIO CARPIO** | FORMER SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, THE PHILIPPINES

for comment on the matter.

The first channel would be used by "representatives to be designated by their leaders," with the other for respective foreign ministries at ministerial or vice-ministerial level, or their designated representatives, according to the document.

The third would involve their respective coast guards "which will be set up once the corresponding MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the coast guards is concluded," the document said.

The source, who declined to be identified because they were not authorised to speak on the issue, said the Philippine foreign ministry was discussing with its

# China suspends arms control talks with US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, July 17:** China Wednesday said it has suspended the crucial arms control and non-proliferation talks with the US, accusing Washington of continuing arms sales to Taiwan.

Announcing this, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lin Jian said the US continued sales of weapons to self-ruled Taiwan, which China claims as a rebel province that must be reunified with the mainland, even by force.

He said that despite Beijing's Opposition, the US actions had "severely damaged the political atmosphere necessary for continued arms control consultations between the two sides".

"China has decided to suspend talks with the US on holding a new round of arms control and non-proliferation consulta-



tions," Lin told a media briefing here. "The responsibility for this situation lies entirely with the US," he said, squarely blaming Washington for the disruption of the talks.

China was willing to maintain communication with the US on the issue but only on the condition that "the US must respect China's core interests and create the necessary conditions for dialogue and exchange between the two sides", he said.

China and the US resumed their talks on arms control and nuclear non-proliferation less than a year ago following the end of Covid-19 restrictions.

# India is a 'strategic partner', says Pentagon

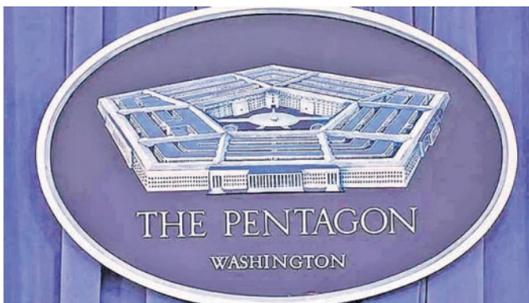
*A week after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia, and meeting with President Vladimir Putin, the US reaffirmed its "strategic" ties with India*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, July 17:** India is a strategic partner of the US and Washington is keen to continue developing that partnership, the Pentagon has said.

Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder made the remarks at a press conference in Washington Tuesday when asked about the US-India military-to-military relations following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"India is a strategic partner, and we look forward to contin-



uing to develop that partnership," he told reporters in response to a question.

Modi was in Russia for two days from July 8-9 for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit that has been watched closely by the West amidst the raging Ukraine conflict. This was Modi's first visit to Russia since the war started between Moscow and Kyiv in 2022.

During his talks with Putin July 9, Prime Minister Modi told

President Putin that a solution to the Ukraine conflict is not possible on the battlefield and peace efforts do not succeed amid bombs and bullets.

India has been stoutly defending its special and priviledged strategic partnership with Russia and maintained the momentum in the ties notwithstanding the Ukraine conflict.

India has not yet condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in

2022 and has consistently pitched for a resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

Responding to a question on the Ukraine-Russia conflict, Pentagon Press Secretary Ryder said, "When it comes to Ukraine and Russia's illegal occupation and invasion of Ukraine. Ultimately, at the end of the day, it's up to Ukraine to decide when they are ready to negotiate for peace."

"Right now, our focus continues to be on working with Ukraine to provide them with what they need to defend their country and defend their sovereignty and take back territory. But at the end of the day, there's no decision about Ukraine without Ukraine," he said.

On Monday, the US acknowledged the longstanding relationship between India and Russia, the US has said that it has encouraged New Delhi to utilise its unique ties with Moscow and urge President Putin to end the illegal war against Ukraine.

# King Charles sets out new Labour government's priorities

THE KING'S SPEECH TRIED TO SET A NEW TONE TO BRITISH POLITICS, PROMOTING SERVICE RATHER THAN SELF INTEREST

REUTERS

**London, July 17:** Britain's King Charles set out Prime Minister Keir Starmer's legislative agenda Wednesday, promising a government of service focused on reviving the economy and tackling issues from an acute housing shortage to a cost of living crisis.

In a ceremony full of pageantry, before an audience of robed lords and lawmakers, Charles read out the laws the government is prioritising after Starmer's centre-left Labour Party won a large majority at this month's election.

The package of more than 35 bills will focus on growing the economy, reforming planning laws to make it easier to build homes and speeding up the delivery of major infrastructure projects, improving transport and creating jobs.

The king's speech, written by the government, also tried to set a new tone to British politics, promoting service rather than self interest, something that Labour says took root over 14 years of often chaotic Conservative Party rule.

"My government will govern



in service to the country," said Charles, wearing a crimson and white robe and the Imperial State crown.

"My government's legislative programme will be mission-led and based on the principles of security, fairness and opportunity for all."

Starmer won one of the largest Parliamentary majorities in modern British history July 4, making him the most powerful national leader since former Prime Minister Tony Blair.

But he faces a number of daunting challenges, including improving struggling public services with little room for more spending.

In an introduction to the proposed legislation, Starmer announced "the era of politics as performance and self-interest above service is over".

But he also had a warning for voters who might hope the new Labour government can quickly fix the problems buffeting Britain. "Rebuilding our coun-

**My government's legislative programme will be mission-led and based on the principles of security, fairness and opportunity for all**

**KING CHARLES III** | KING, UK

try will not happen overnight. The challenges we face require determined, patient work and serious solutions," he wrote.

"We will unlock growth and take the brakes off Britain, turning the page for good on the economic irresponsibility and pervasive inability to face the future that we saw under the Conservative government."

**HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE**  
The government announced legislation to "speed up and streamline the planning process" to help address Britain's acute housing shortage and the long delays that dog infrastructure projects.

With the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, the government signalled it would restrict the ability of local people to block new developments, saying there would be "democratic engagement with how, not if, homes and infrastructure

are built".

The government also set out plans to gradually renationalise the passenger rail network and set affordable fares to draw people back on to trains by handing the state control of rail contracts held by private companies, once they have expired.

This decision would mostly reverse the privatisation of the railways conducted in the 1990s by the then-Conservative government.

The speech also made clear the government's drive to reset relations with the European Union after years of Brexit rancour, with the king saying his ministers "will seek a new security pact to strengthen cooperation".

It is a goal Starmer can work towards when he hosts a meeting of the European Political Community, a group of more than 40 states formed in 2022 after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Following on from meetings at a NATO summit in Washington last week, Starmer and his team hope to press on with those conversations, although any talks on a security pact would most likely come later in the year.

## UK LoP: PATEL VS SUNAK

Britain's former home secretary, Priti Patel, is expected to contest the Conservative Party leadership race to replace Rishi Sunak as Opposition Leader in the House of Commons



# Dhaka University closed indefinitely

Students asked to vacate dorms amid violence over job quota

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Dhaka, July 17:** Authorities at the premier Dhaka University Wednesday announced an indefinite closure of the institution after ongoing protests demanding reforms in the quota system in government jobs turned violent and left at least six people, including three students, dead across the country.

The students have been asked to vacate their dormitories by 6 pm Wednesday. This decision was taken at an emergency syndicate meeting at the office of Vice Chancellor ASM Maksud Kamal, Pro-VC (Academic) Prof Sitesh C Bachar was quoted as saying by the Dhaka Tribune.

Considering the security of the students, we have decided to close the university indefinitely and evacuate the halls, Bachar told The Daily Star.

However, students of the university are protesting the decision, and they have thronged the VC's residence, the report added. At least six people, including three students, were killed and more than 100 others injured Tuesday after protesters demanded quota reforms in public service and clashed with police in major cities across Bangladesh, forcing the closure of schools and colleges.

The High Court June 5 declared illegal a 2018 government circular that abolished quotas in govern-

**At least six people, including three students, were killed and over 100 others injured in the protest Tuesday**

ment jobs, and July 10, the Supreme Court issued a status quo on the High Court judgement.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) directed all universities to suspend academic activities until further notice and instructed students to leave residential halls.

In response, an urgent meeting of Dhaka University's highest policy making body, the syndicate, was convened Wednesday.

The UGC's directive followed a series of clashes that erupted during the quota reform protests.

The clashes, however, erupted Monday as activists of ruling Awami League's student front confronted the protestors who insist the existing quota system was largely debaring the enrolment of meritorious students in government services.

Student protesters demanding reforms in the quota system in government jobs Wednesday announced plans to enforce a complete nationwide shutdown Thursday.

## Modern medical facility built with Indian help unveiled in Mauritius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Port Louis, July 17:** A modern medical facility built with Indian grant assistance to Mauritius was inaugurated Wednesday with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar calling it the "newest expression of our friendship".

Jaishankar arrived here Tuesday on a two-day visit, one of the first countries he was visiting in his current term as External Affairs Minister.

Inaugurating the Mediclinic in Grand Bois, built with Indian grant assistance, Jaishankar described it as "the newest expression of our friendship".

Addressing the event, he said it will provide secondary health care for 16,000 people in the area.

"I'm told it will provide secondary health care for 16,000 people in the Grand Bois area, and we feel very proud to be a partner in this collaboration."

"We feel proud because, after Covid-19, health is a priority. All of us have become health conscious," he said.

"We worry about things rightly so. But we also believe, all of us believe that health is our right. And that right today, every government has a duty to deliver," he said.

# business

## of the day quote

The current GST rate structure of passenger vehicles in India is outdated and needs to be aligned with the new developments in the auto industry

**RAJEEV CHABA** | CEO EMERITUS, JSW MG MOTOR

With its huge number of skilled engineers, and fast-growing aviation sector, India is a natural location for us to invest in for the future of our business, and we look forward to accelerating our software innovation and design capabilities from our new Pune facility

**KEN SAIN** | CEO, PANASONIC AVIONICS CORPORATION

We expect the focus of the budget to remain green growth based... We expect the budget to focus more on renewables, storage, transmission and distribution network strengthening schemes

**GIRISHKUMAR KADAM** | SENIOR VP & GROUP HEAD (CORPORATE RATINGS), ICRA

## SHORT TAKES

### Byju's to appeal against insolvency

**New Delhi:** Education technology company Byju's will challenge insolvency proceedings initiated against it in an attempt to block the process this week, as the startup once valued at \$22 billion tries to tide over the crisis, two sources said Wednesday. The National Company Law Tribunal in the southern state of Karnataka Tuesday ordered insolvency proceedings against the company after a complaint by the cricket board for not paying \$19 million in dues. A court-appointed professional is currently running the firm.

### Asian Paints profit drops 24.6% in Q1

**New Delhi:** Asian Paints Ltd Wednesday reported a 24.64 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to ₹1,186.79 crore in the June quarter, hit by demand slowdown due to severe heatwave and general elections. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,574.84 crore in the same period last fiscal year, Asian Paints said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations in the first quarter of the current fiscal was down at ₹8,969.73 crore as compared to ₹9,182.31 crore in the year-ago period, it added.



India is finally opening up to different investment products, styles and approaches. Passive, factor, inverse ETFs, alts and more. There is no single way to invest

**RADHIKA GUPTA** | MD AND CEO, EDELWEISS MUTUAL FUND

## INDIGO LEADS AIR TRAFFIC

Airlines carried around 13.2 million passengers last month, compared to 12.5 million flyers in June 2023, data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation showed. IndiGo maintains lead as India's largest airline



# SMALL STOCKS REAP BIG GAINS THIS YEAR

## BSE MIDCAP GAUGE JUMPS 30%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 17:** Smaller stocks have emerged as markets' favourites so far this year, giving big returns to investors amid optimism over the country's macroeconomic fundamentals and surge in domestic liquidity. Till July 16 this year, the BSE midcap gauge has jumped 10,984.72 points or 29.81 per cent, while the smallcap index has surged 11,628.13 points or 27.24 per cent. In comparison, the BSE 30-share benchmark Sensex has rallied 8,476.29 points or 11.73 per cent so far this year. "The primary reason for the outperformance of midcap and



The outperformance of midcap and smallcap indices compared to the Sensex this year can be attributed to sector-specific strengths in technology, healthcare, and consumer goods, coupled with their lower valuations and higher growth potential in a booming economy

**ARVINDER SINGH NANDA** | SENIOR VP, MASTER CAPITAL SERVICES

smallcap stocks is the surge in domestic liquidity. A substantial amount of domestic money is flowing into these segments through mutual funds, portfolio management services (PMS), and direct investments," said Sunil Nyati, Managing Director, Swastika Investmart Ltd. We are currently in a structural bull market, where midcap and smallcap stocks tend to

outperform, he noted. "While largecap stocks have also performed well, they have lagged behind midcap and smallcap stocks due to selling by foreign institutional investors (FIIs)," Nyati added. Experts said equity markets are experiencing a prolonged bull run, and it is during this time that the midcap and smallcap segments tend to outshine

their larger counterparts. "We are currently in a global bull market led by the US, while our market is outperforming other emerging markets due to strong fundamentals and abundant domestic liquidity. Although there are valuation concerns, particularly in the midcap and smallcap segments, the largecap space still has room for further upside. Furthermore, foreign

institutional investors have now shifted to a buying mood after aggressively selling in the first half of 2024," Nyati said. The BSE midcap gauge hit its all-time high of 48,175.21 July 16 this year, while the smallcap index reached its lifetime peak of 54,617.75 July 8. The BSE benchmark hit its record high of 80,898.3 July 16. The midcap index tracks companies with a market value that is on average one-fifth of blue-chips, while smallcap firms are almost a tenth of that universe. According to analysts, smaller stocks are generally bought by local investors, while overseas investors focus on blue-chips or large firms. Experts said active participation from domestic investors has played a big role in pushing the broader market counters.

## FOOD SUBSIDIES TO COST ₹2.25TN, 11% MORE THAN PLANNED

REUTERS

**New Delhi, July 17:** India is likely to spend ₹2.25 trillion (\$11.97 billion) on food subsidies this financial year, four government sources said, up around 11% from the interim budget estimate in February due to higher spending on the support price for farmers.



The country's combined food and fertiliser bill is expected to reach ₹3.88 trillion, up 5% rise from the estimate in the interim budget unveiled before the election.

Interim budget estimates will be replaced by a new budget from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government that will be presented July 23.

Food and fertiliser subsidies in the interim budget accounted for about 8% of India's total spending of 47.66 trillion rupees during the fiscal year that ends March 31, 2025.

In the interim budget, the food subsidy bill was estimated at ₹2.05 trillion, two of the sources said.

The increase since then is largely due to a rise in the price at which the government buys rice and wheat from domestic farmers, one of the sources said.

Meanwhile, the government is likely to stick to its previous estimate of ₹1.64 trillion for the fertiliser subsidy, two of the sources said.

# ADB retains India growth forecast

**THE INDIAN ECONOMY LOGGED A GROWTH RATE OF 8.2% FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED MARCH 2024, AS AGAINST 7% IN THE PREVIOUS FISCAL YEAR**

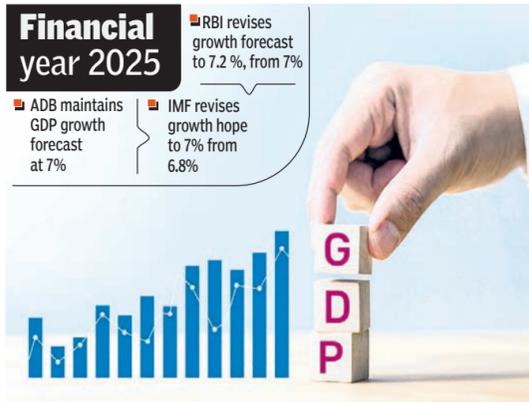
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 17:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Wednesday maintained India's GDP growth forecast at 7 per cent for the current financial year, citing that a rebound in agriculture is expected given above-normal monsoon projections.

The ADB forecast comes a day after the International Monetary Fund revised upward its GDP growth projections for India to 7 per cent compared to 6.8 per cent projected in April. Last month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) revised upward its growth forecast to 7.2 per cent, from 7 per cent estimated earlier.

The Indian economy is on track to grow by 7 per cent in FY2024 (ending 31 March 2025) and 7.2 per cent in FY2025 (next financial year), as projected in ADO April 2024, said the July edition of the Asian Development Outlook (ADO).

Services continued to expand robustly in Q4 of FY24, and the forward-looking services PMI is well above its long-term average, it said, adding, industry is also expected to grow robustly, driven by manufacturing and strong demand for construction led by housing, it said.



"After muted growth in FY2023 (previous fiscal), a rebound in agriculture is expected given the above-normal monsoon projections. This is notwithstanding the slower advance of monsoon in June. A rebound in agriculture will be important to sustain growth momentum in rural areas," it said.

Investment demand continues to be strong, led by public investments and bank credit is fueling robust housing demand and improving private investment demand, it said.

However, it said, export growth will continue to be led by services, with merchandise exports showing relatively weaker growth.

The stronger-than-expected fiscal position of the central government could provide a further boost to growth, it said.

However, the report said, this must be weighed against downside risks arising from weather events and geopolitical shocks.

With regard to inflation, ADO has also retained its forecast at

4.6 per cent for the current financial year and expects it to marginally decline to 4.5 per cent next fiscal.

## ASIA OUTLOOK

With regard to developing Asia's growth forecast, ADO said, it is revised up to 5 per cent in 2024 and maintained at 4.9 per cent in 2025.

Growth projections remain broadly unchanged with respect to ADO April 2024, it said, adding, resilient domestic demand along with improved exports and manufacturing will support growth this year.

The region's 2024 growth forecast has been marginally adjusted up by 0.1 percentage points due to upward revisions in the Caucasus and Central Asia along with East Asia, it said.

Meanwhile, the inflation forecast for the region has fallen to 2.9 per cent in 2024, largely due to downward revisions in China and the Caucasus and Central Asia, which offset a slight increase in South Asia, it said.

## Exposure to infra helps LIC, SBI overtake peers

Most Indian insurance companies are yet to capitalise on the emergence of the country's infrastructure sector, analysts said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 17:** Shares of state-owned behemoth Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) have outperformed rivals like HDFC Life and ICICI Prudential Life as it placed bets on India's growth sectors, including infrastructure, while the private sector concentrated bet on tech, consumer and consumer-related BFSI companies.

LIC's stock has gained nearly 79 per cent from ₹620 July 18, 2023, to ₹1,109.15 at the closing Tuesday, according to stock exchange data.

In contrast, HDFC Life gave a negative return, if Tuesday's closing price of ₹646.55 on the BSE is compared to ₹666.55 a



year back.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Co delivered a return of 12 per cent, considering its stock price rise from ₹582 July 18, 2023, to ₹654.10 July 16, 2024.

Over the past one year, SBI Life Insurance shares have risen from ₹1,314 to ₹1,621.20, delivering a return of 23 per cent.

SBI, with its higher exposure to the infrastructure sector, has seen its stock gain 48 per cent in the year (from ₹592 to ₹880.95 Tuesday), while those of its private counterparts HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank have gained only in the range of (-)3 per cent to 24 per cent.

## BANKS' BUZZ

### CSPs/BCs/RSETI meet at SBI

**Bhubaneswar:** A meeting for Customer Service Points (CSPs)/Banking Correspondents (BCs)/Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) directors was organised at SBI LHO Bhubaneswar July 16. The meeting was presided by Dinesh Pruthi, CGM SBI Bhubaneswar Circle in the presence of Golak Bihari Panda, Principal Coordinator - DFS, Parmod Kumar Bansal, General Manager (Financial Inclusion), SBI Corporate Centre Mumbai and other senior officials of SBI. Pruthi highlighted the vital roles of CSPs in promoting financial inclusion and enrolling beneficiaries under Social Security Schemes. During his deliberation, Panda shared the recent developments of Government of India in the area of financial inclusion and appreciated performance of Bhubaneswar Circle in various parameters of Social Security Schemes. Six beneficiaries were handed insurance cheques under PMJJBY/PMSBY schemes.



### Canara's plantation drive

**Bhubaneswar:** In view of the guidance given by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and to participate in the Plant4Mother campaign, Canara Bank Circle Bhubaneswar carried out plantation activity in BMC Park at Paika Nagar, Gopabandhu Nagar, Bhubaneswar. The event was attended by Netra Mohan Patra, Deputy General Manager, Canara Bank Circle Bhubaneswar, BB Mohapatra, BMC Environment Officer and P Balasubramanian, Assistant General Manager, Canara Bank Circle Bhubaneswar. Over 70 'Baulia' tree samplings were planted along with 60 decorative plants. Canara Bank Circle office is also donating 500 'Baulia' tree sampling to BMC for their plantation requirements at various places.

### BoI ED to visit Odisha

**Bhubaneswar:** Bank of India, a premier bank having business mix of 13.6 lakh crore and branch network of more than 5100 is celebrating Kisan Diwas July 19 throughout the country. On this eve Bank of India Executive Director PR Rajagopal is visiting Odisha to participate in the various activities organised by FGMO Bhubaneswar and its four zones Baripada, Bhubaneswar, Keonjhar and Sambalpur. The main event will be organised in Pipli.



# Economy poised for robust growth ahead of Budget

REUTERS

**New Delhi, July 17:** India's economy is expanding at the fastest rate among major emerging economies, and tax receipts are higher, factors that could prompt Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to increase spending in the new 2024/25 Budget that will be presented to parliament July 23.

The Budget is expected to see an increase in spending on infrastructure and welfare programmes such as rural housing, following bumper dividend payouts from the central bank and increased tax revenue. However, Sitharaman is likely to adhere to the interim budget's fiscal deficit targets.

Here are some facts about India's economy:

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has upgraded its growth forecast for the fiscal year 2024/25 to 7.2%, up from 7%, driven by a resurgence in private consumption, robust investment, and a rebound in exports.



Similarly, the International Monetary Fund has revised India's growth forecast to 7% for 2024/25 from 6.8%, aligning

with recent updates from rating agencies and private economists. S&P expects India's economy

will grow at nearly 7% annually over the next three years.

## INFLATION

Retail inflation in India has eased to around 5% from over 7% in 2022. Still, food inflation remains persistently high at around 9%, impacting rural and low-income urban households. This persistent inflation, coupled with minimal growth in real wages, is dampening expectations for early interest rate cuts by the RBI.

## FISCAL DEFICIT

India's federal fiscal deficit, which exceeded 9% of GDP during the pandemic, is projected to remain around 5% for the current fiscal year.

However, the combined federal and state fiscal deficits are estimated at 7.9% of GDP, reflecting a large debt stock and high-interest burden that constrain the capacity for increased state spending.

## HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT

Despite a rebound in employment in manufacturing and services, high unemployment among the educated youth re-

mains a challenge for Asia's third-largest economy.

The unemployment rate for urban youth aged 15-29 was 17% in the first quarter of March, with private agencies suggesting that the actual rate may be higher.

India's overall unemployment rate has remained much higher over the decades than China, according to International Labour Organisation estimates, with millions remaining stuck in low-paying agriculture and informal sector jobs.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

India's goods and services exports are on an upward trajectory, despite concerns over a global slowdown and geopolitical risks. Exports are projected to reach \$800 billion in the current fiscal year ending March 2025, up from \$778.2 billion in the previous fiscal year.

Rising services exports and private transfer receipts have helped India's current account balance, which is showing a \$5.7 billion surplus for the first time in 10 quarters in three months through March.

## ALL-TIME HIGH

# Rising US rate cut hope boosts gold

REUTERS

**Washington, July 17:** Gold prices hit a record high Wednesday, as comments from Federal Reserve officials boosted expectations of a September interest rate cut in the US.

Spot gold was up 0.2% at \$2,473.89 per ounce as of 10:02 GMT, after hitting an all-time high of \$2,482.29 earlier in the session. US gold futures gained 0.4% to \$2,478.50.

"It seems like it's evident that the Federal Reserve is going to cut rates in September and that, coupled with the concept of the de-dollarization of how central banks have been buying more gold versus the US Treasury yields, are currently the catalyst that is driving gold to these highs," said Alex Ebkarian, chief operating officer at Allegiance Gold.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said Monday recent inflation readings "add somewhat to confidence"



We will see some volatility as the market needs to confirm this isn't just a temporary euphoria

ALEX EBKARIAN | CEO, ALLEGIANCE GOLD

Spot gold up 0.2% at \$2,473.89 per ounce vs \$2,482.29  
Traders see 100% chance of Fed rate cut in September  
Geopolitics, recession risks could push gold to \$2,600-\$2,700

that the pace of price increases is returning to the central bank's target in a sustainable fashion. Markets see a 100% chance of a US rate cut in September, according to the CME FedWatch Tool. Meanwhile, silver fell 1.4% to \$30.95 per ounce, platinum rose 2.1% to \$1,021.20 and palladium added 2.1% to \$979.48.

ASSOCIATION HEAD STATES THAT ALL SPORTSPERSONS HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO TAKE OWN SUPPORT STAFF

# Usha slams IOA critics



Some members of the athletics squad and support staff ahead of their departure for Paris in New Delhi

PHOTO: AFI X

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 17:** Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha said Wednesday 'unprecedented teamwork' between the Sports Ministry, IOA and the national federations ensured that Paris-bound athletes got the support staff of their choice and lashed out at critics for turning a 'blind eye to such synergy'.

The Sports Ministry has cleared 117 athletes and 140 support staff for the Paris Olympics, beginning July 26, with the standout feature being an almost three-fold increase in the number of support staff, including personal coaches, mental trainers and physiotherapists.

A 13-member sports science team especially constituted by the IOA under renowned sports medicine expert, Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, is also being sent with the athletes.

"At IOA, we have embarked on an era when athletes are at the centre of our planning and preparations. Instead of the usual 3:1 ratio between athletes and support staff, we have worked hard to change it to slightly better than 1:1 ratio," Usha said in a statement Wednesday. Usha pointed out that 68 coaches and 50 support staff will accompany the 117 athletes.

Usha said despite efforts to ensure athletes' demands were met, it was

## MINISTRY CLEARS INDIAN CONTINGENT

**New Delhi:** India will be represented by 117 athletes at this month's Paris Olympics after the Sports Ministry cleared the final contingent that also features 140 support staff and officials, of which 72 have been approved at 'cost to the government' to meet the 'requirements' of the travelling sportspersons. The only qualified athlete missing from the list is shot-putter Abha Khataua. No one knows the reason why she has been dropped. London Olympics bronze medallist former shooter Gagan Narang is the chef-de-mission. Narang is also a vice-president in the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). Athletics will make for the biggest group in the contingent with 29 names (11 women and 18 men), followed by shooting (21) and hockey (19).

'disappointing' to hear that some reports were still painting a negative picture of the work.

"Together with the Sports Ministry, and its units, the national sports federations (NSFs) and a good bunch of corporate partners, IOA had forged unprecedented teamwork. It is shocking that some have turned a blind eye to such synergy," Usha stated.

Despite the huge number of support staff being cleared, Antim Panghal, one of the six wrestlers who has qual-

ified for the Olympics, is reportedly still waiting for visas for her four-member support staff, hampering her training.

Usha said she would ensure there are no further visa delays for any of the athletes' non-accredited support staff and that she would take up issue of Antim's coach Bhagat Singh, physiotherapist Heera and sparring partner Vikas with the Embassy of France in India.

The IOA president blamed the now disbanded ad-hoc committee of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for the confusion.

"In its wisdom (the IOA-appointed) ad hoc committee, administering wrestling, chose not to include the names of Antim's coach or physiotherapist in the long list of names sent to the Olympic Games organising committee," said Usha.

"It is strange that the responsible authorities, who approved the long list of athletes, coaching and support staff, did not deem it fit to recommend the inclusion of Bhagat Singh or Heera or Vikas. It was only after Antim's father came to IOA that I stepped in to have them cleared by the Ministry. We are confident IOA will be able to facilitate a speedy processing of visa requests of those coaches and support staff cleared by the Ministry," Usha added.

**A CHANCE TO BE PART OF**

# METTLE MEET 2024

HERE . NOW

# OrissaPOST

**QUIZ Extravaganza**

It's time for **METTLE MEET** – an initiative by the state's only homegrown English daily to revive quizzing in Odisha. This year, the **Preliminaries** will take place **August 3** and the **Grand Finale August 4**. Like in previous years, most of the top educational institutions of Odisha – both schools and colleges will be competing for the **Grand Prize of ₹1,00,000** in the Junior and Senior segments.

**A**s a reader of **Orissa POST**, this is a great chance for you to be part of the exciting **Grand Finale** if you can predict the correct answer. There will be one question on each day for you to answer till July 31, 2024. Every day there will be two winners. If there are more than two correct entries, then the winners will be decided by draw of lots. All the winners will be invited for the **Grand Finale** which will be conducted by nationally acclaimed quizmaster **Ajay Poonia**. There will be prizes for the daily winners too. So buckle up your seatbelts and get set for some brainstorming.

### RULES & REGULATIONS

- Everyone will have to mail their answers to [mettlemeet@orissapost.com](mailto:mettlemeet@orissapost.com)
- Answers to the questions will follow the next day. The names of the winners will also be announced along with their pictures.
- Answers mailed between 8.00am to 6.00pm each day will be considered valid.
- **Orissa POST's** decision on all entries will be final. No complaints will be entertained.
- Participants must send their entries with a **passport size photograph, mobile numbers and residential address**. Otherwise the entries will be rejected.
- There can be only one winner from one family.
- Invitation cards to the winners will only be issued on presentation of **Valid ID proof – Voter Card, Aadhaar Card, Driving License, Passport, School ID card** (In case of students till Class XI)
- No employee of **Orissa POST** or their family members can be part of the competition

### TODAY'S QUESTION

**W**hat game was launched in 2014 and has the player character avoiding Cactaceae and Pteranodon until it hits an obstacle or a Pterosauria? The reason the designers chose the player character to be this animal was a joke signifying the player living in prehistoric times and is thus playing the game.

### ANSWER TO WEDNESDAY'S QUESTION

**Sanjeevani Booti**

### THE TWO LUCKY WINNERS



SMRUTI RANJAN SENDH



ASHISH AGARWALLA

**Others who answered correctly are**  
Akanksha Pradhan, Abhijit Raychadhuri, R Sekhar Rao and Jignesh Kumar

## SHORT TAKES

### 3 Odisha hoopsters in Indian Univ squad

**Bhubaneswar:** Three players from Odisha, two from KIIT and one from Utkal University have found a place in the India varsities 12-member basketball squad that will participate in the Vllth Asian University Men's Basketball Championships. The tournament will be held in Taipei September 2 to September 7. The two players from KIIT are Nipun Aswal and Yusuph Maswi while the hoopster from Utkal University is Abhishek Panda.

### Messi to miss at least 2 matches

**Fort Lauderdale (US):** Lionel Messi is likely to miss at least the next two matches for Inter Miami, his MLS team, after injuring his right ankle during the Copa America final, coach Gerardo 'Tata' Martino said here Tuesday. The medical team of the club said Messi has suffered a ligament injury in his right ankle, and his availability will be assessed periodically as rehab progresses. Inter Miami will host Toronto FC Wednesday night and Chicago Saturday night. Messi however, said he was doing well in an Instagram post Monday.

### 1st round exit for Nagal in doubles

**Bastad (Sweden):** Olympic bound Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal and his Polish partner Karol Drzewiecki made a first round exit after suffering a straight-set loss in the Nordea Open tennis tournament here. The Indo-Polish pair suffered a 3-6, 4-6 defeat in the hands of the French duo of Alexandre Muller and Luca Van Assche in a 59-minute round of 16 contest Tuesday evening. Nagal however, is alive in singles and will play his match later in the day.

### Bawa bags bronze

**New Delhi:** India's Shaurya Bawa signed off with a bronze medal after going down 0-3 to Egyptian top seed Mohamed Zakaria in the boys' singles semifinal of the World Junior Squash Championships in Houston. Bawa lost 5-11, 5-11, 9-11 to last year's runner-up Zakaria in a 41-minute semifinal contest. Zakaria was in complete control in the 41-minute match.

## BCCI rejects Gambhir's proposal

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 17:** Morning shows the day is a proverb frequently used. And if one has to go by the recent developments, the transition from Rahul Dravid to Gautam Gambhir is not taking place smoothly. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has rejected most of the names suggested by head coach Gambhir as his support staff, except one. The names suggested by Gambhir haven't reportedly been well received by the BCCI.

Gambhir had suggested the names of R Vinay Kumar, Morne Morkel, Abhishek Nayyar, Ryan Ten Doeschate, Jonty Rhodes and Laxmipathy Balaji for different roles, but the BCCI has agreed to bring on board only Nayyar as a support staff so far. Nayyar was the assistant coach of Kolkata Knight Riders and when Gambhir proposed his name, the BCCI accepted it, though any formal announcement is yet to be made.

However, the vacancies for bowling and fielding coaches remain as the BCCI has rejected the other names. In the past, the



BCCI had given free hand to Dravid and Ravi Shastri to choose their coaching staff.

Sources stated Wednesday that the BCCI wants Zaheer Khan as the next bowling coach of the Indian team. Zaheer, one of the finest pacers to have played the game, picked up 311 wickets in 92 Tests and overall 610 scalps in 309 international matches across all formats for India.

Balaji's name was reportedly also discussed even though his

international figures are not as staggering as Zaheer's. He represented Team India in eight Tests and 30 ODIs bagging 61 wickets across the formats.

The term of Paras Mahambrey, who was the bowling coach of India when Dravid was head coach, has come to an end. In his place the BCCI is keen to recruit Zaheer

Sources said that the if the BCCI and Gambhir do not reach an agreement regarding the fielding coach, then T Dilip's tenure could be extended.

## 'SKY' RETAINS 2ND POSITION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, July 17:** The big-hitting Suryakumar Yadav is the highest placed Indian at second spot, while young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal occupies the sixth position in the ICC T20I batting rankings issued Wednesday. Rituraj Gaikwad has dropped a place to the eighth position in the T20 batters' list, which was updated following India's recent 4-1 series triumph over Zimbabwe. The list is headed by Travis Head of Australia.

Shubman Gill, who led India against Zimbabwe in the absence of senior players and was the leading run-scorer of the series with 170 runs from five innings, moved up a whopping 36 places to 37th.

No Indian features in the top 10 of the T20I bowlers' rankings. Axar Patel, who was rested for the Zimbabwe series, dropped four places to 13th spot. Fast bowler Mukesh Kumar and spinner Washington Sundar however, made upward movements.

Mukesh, who scalped eight wickets from three games, has gained 36 places to rise to 46th.

## Rimjhim stars in Odisha's triumph

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 17:** The women's and men's teams of Hockey Odisha scripted facile victories Wednesday in their respective matches at the Hind Hockey India Junior Men and Women East Zone Championships being played in Kolkata. The eves from Odisha thrashed Hockey Bihar 11-0, while the men trounced Manipur Hockey 7-0. In the process both the men and women teams registered their third successive wins in the tournament.

The Odisha eves dominated the game from the start, never allowing the Bihar players to settle down. Kachhap Rimjhim was the star performer for Odisha scoring four goals (20th, 21st, 31st, 36th) including a hat-trick. The other goal scorers were Najiya Khatun (eighth, 34th), Marandi Rajina (38th), Khushi Kumari (44th), Sugandha Sonam (49th, 50th) and Kumari Sharda (57th). Immediately after her second goal, Sonam also had a chance to get her hat-trick, but



wasted an easy opportunity.

In the men's section, it was an equally dominating show by Hockey Odisha against Manipur Hockey. Rohit Kullu (14th, 60th), Sunil Lakra (22nd), Deepak Pradhan (28th, 50th), Premdayal Giri (41st) and Deonath Nanwar (47th) were the goal scorers for Odisha. Had they not been profigate, they could have also achieved a similar scoreline like that of the eves.

In other matches played on the day, Hockey Jharkhand thrashed Assam Hockey 13-0 in the women's category. Roshni Aind of Jharkhand got a hat-trick in the game.

## Nadal prepares for last hurrah

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, July 17:** When he first discussed the likelihood that 2024 would be his final season as a professional tennis player, Rafael Nadal made sure to refer to the Paris Olympics as 'one of the important competitions I would like to be at'.

No event, at least in this sport, defines an athlete's legacy the way the clay court Grand Slam tournament does for Nadal. And, the opposite is true, too, which is why there is a statue of the 38-year-old Spaniard at Roland Garros, the site of a record 14 of his 22 major trophies and where the Olympic tennis matches begin on July 27.

Nadal skipped Wimbledon to avoid going from clay to grass and back to clay at the Paris Games, where he has been planning to team in doubles with Carlos Alcaraz, the 21-year-old coming off back-to-back major titles at



Roland Garros and the All England Club.

And, even though the idea that Nadal could add to his gold medals – in singles at Beijing in 2008, and in doubles with Marc López at Rio de Janeiro in 2016 – seems far-fetched, just the sight of him back in Paris will mean a lot to him and his fans.

"My body has been a jungle for two years. You don't know what to expect," said Nadal, who has been able to play only 16 matches since the start of last year. "I wake up one day and I (felt like I had) a snake biting me. Another day, a tiger," he added.

## Mayor swims in Seine to clear doubts

### NUMBER OF OLYMPIC SWIMMING EVENTS TO BE HELD IN THE RIVER

AGENCIES

**Paris, July 17:** Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo finally swam Wednesday in the River Seine, fulfilling a promise to try to convince doubters that its waters will be clean enough to hold Olympic swimming events.

Hidalgo took the plunge around 10am on a glorious summer's day in the French capital, with visitors crowding on nearby bridges to catch a glimpse of her after several postponements due to heavy rain and doubts about water quality.

Hidalgo, clad in a wetsuit and goggles, was joined in the Seine by Tony Estanguet, the head of the Paris Olympics Organising Committee, among others. At first she paddled and then swam front crawl with her face in the water.



"We have worked very, very hard and then you go down into the water and it seems natural," Hidalgo said after the swim. "The water is very, very good, a little bit cool."

The triathlon and marathon swimming legs of the Olympics, which run from July 26 to August 11 are due to be held in the Seine.

According to the most recent July 12 Seine water quality bul-

letin, based on the 'Eau de Paris' water analysis, the water quality would be suitable for swimming in six out of seven days at the Olympics swimming sites.

Decisions on whether to run Olympics events will be taken the night before, and early that same morning, with a technical committee including athletes, international federation, regional authorities and 'Meteo France'

making the call.

This city has built a huge storage basin capable of holding 46,000 cubic metres of waste water before it flows through a tunnel to a treatment plant. When the water meets the required health criteria, it will then be poured into the Seine.

If the river is not deemed to be suitable, organisers have contingency plans: the marathon swimming event will take place at Vaires-sur-Marne, where the rowing and canoeing events are held, and the triathlon will be turned into a duathlon.

Jenn Fluet, a 21-year-old tourist said Hidalgo was brave. Asked if she would follow suit, Fluet said: "Hell no! It's dirty." Quentin Mazars, a 33-year-old swimming club member who joined Hidalgo in the Seine, said he 'was careful not to drink the water'.