



Unfiltered Esha

Actor Esha Gupta opens up about the long-standing label of being called a 'sex symbol' in Bollywood

LEISURE | P2

More defence spending

NATO leaders agree on a massive hike in defence spending after pressure from US President Donald Trump

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Trading hours extended

The market timings for call money will be extended by two hours to 7pm with effect from July 1, RBI announces

BUSINESS | P11

Neeraj not happy

Neeraj Chopra far from satisfied with his performance despite clinching the Golden Spike title in his maiden appearance

SPORTS | P12

CM launches e-registration mobile app by Revenue dept

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday launched an e-registration mobile application developed by the Revenue department.

While launching the app, the Chief Minister described it as a significant milestone in the state government's efforts to deliver digital public services.

The app, Majhi said, allows users to book slots, obtain certified copies, and access encumbrance certificates (EC) for registration deeds—all from the convenience of their Android mobile phones.

The Chief Minister said that users can also check the benchmark value of land and access complete information about the respective Sub-Registrar's office through the app.

He noted that the new system has become fully paperless and cashless, significantly reducing unnecessary crowding at Sub-Registrar offices.

Highlighting the achievements of the Revenue department, the Chief Minister stated that this year, under the Vasundhara Yojana, the government has provided housing leases to 16,727 homeless individuals.

In the past year, permanent land leases have been issued in the names of 20,385 government institutions, including primary schools, upper primary schools, high schools, and colleges.

Additionally, through a special campaign, 4,61,602 land accounts have been officially recorded in favour of their legal heirs.

Majhi also unveiled a booklet published by the Revenue department, which documents the department's achievements over the past year. He said it reflects a responsible administrative system marked by efficiency and citizen-centric governance.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He may have fought the Emergency... but now emergency ward is the only option for his treatment



FOR A CAUSE: Students of Rama Devi Women's University take part in a campaign in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, to protest the alleged rise in crimes against women in the aftermath of the gangrape of a college student in Gopalpur

Woman gangraped in Mayurbhanj dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Karanjia, June 25: A woman was allegedly abducted and gangraped by four persons at a roadside dhaba under this police limits in Mayurbhanj district Tuesday night, police said Wednesday.

Acting on a complaint lodged by the survivor's kin, police registered a case (219/25) and detained an accused. The rest three accused are absconding after committing the crime, police said.

The incident occurred at a time when the woman had come on a visit to her maternal uncle's house under this police limits.

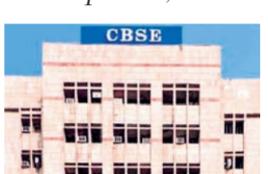
Sources said she was returning to her maternal uncle's house after visiting a temple at around 4.30pm Tuesday. She was on her way back when the youths on a bike spotted her alone near a cashew forest and abducted her on the vehicle. They took her to a roadside dhaba in the area and took turns to rape her.

The woman managed to return home after much effort and narrated her ordeal before the family members. Shocked kin lodged a complaint at the Karanjia police station at 2.30am, the same day. This incident comes within 10 days of the alleged gangrape of a college student at Gopalpur sea beach in Ganjam district.

Class X board twice a year from 2026: CBSE

First phase mandatory, second optional; best score to be retained if opted

- ◆ Internal assessment to be conducted only once
- ◆ First phase results in April, second phase in June
- ◆ No separate supplementary exams will be conducted
- ◆ If a student does not appear for at least three subjects in the first exam, he or she will not be allowed to appear for the second exam



ommended in the new National Education Policy (NEP). "The first phase will be conducted in February and second in May. The results for the two phases will be announced in April and June, respectively," CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj said.

"It will be mandatory (for students) to appear for the first phase while the second phase will be optional. Students will be allowed to improve their performance in any three subjects out of science, mathematics, social science and languages," he added.

Explaining the rationale behind making the first phase mandatory for the students, CBSE Chairman Rahul Singh said it is being done to ensure that students take the exams seriously and the sanctity of the board exams is maintained.

"If a student does not appear for three or more subjects in the first examination, he or she will

not be allowed to appear for the second exam. Such students will be placed in the 'Essential Repeat' category and can take the examination only next year in the main exam in February," he said.

"Students whose result in the first examination is compartment will be allowed to appear in the second examination under the compartment category. Additional subjects will not be permitted after passing Class X, students will not be allowed in stand-alone subjects," he added.

According to the approved norms, Class X students from winter-bound schools will get an option to appear for the board exams in any of the two phases. Similarly, sports students will be allowed to appear in the second phase in subjects which coincide with their sports events.

The internal assessment will be conducted only once during the academic session. The CBSE announced the draft norms in February, which were put in the public domain for stakeholders' feedback, including from schools, teachers, parents, students and the public.

The Board has clarified that no separate supplementary exams will be conducted under this system.

HC flays 'bulldozer justice'

In a strong judicial retaliation against unlawful 'bulldozer action', the Orissa High Court has ordered the state govt to pay ₹10 lakh compensation, out of which ₹2 lakh is to be recovered from the salary of the concerned tehsildar, for illegally demolishing a structure belonging to a community centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, June 25: Expressing deep concern over the bulldozing of a community hall by an officer of tehsildar rank, the Orissa High Court Wednesday ordered the state government to pay ₹10 lakh compensation to the petitioners. In a sharply worded judgment, Justice SK Panigrahi observed that "in a system governed by law, force must follow reason, not precede it. Where the reverse occurs, the legitimacy of State action begins to erode, and with it, the credi-

bility of institutions tasked with upholding the rule of law."

"The facts of this case echo a growing and troubling pattern, commonly referred to as 'bulldozer justice', where executive power, backed by machinery rather than reason, supplants legal process. The use of demolition as a tool of enforcement, absent procedural compliance and judicial finality, transforms what should be a lawful act into a coercive one," the single-judge bench observed.

The judge warned that such actions, if left unchecked, could set a dangerous precedent, where field-level officers entrusted with significant statutory powers begin to treat judicial timelines as administrative gaps to be tactically exploited.

Holding the demolition to be unlawful, the court awarded ₹10 lakh as compensation to the petitioners. Of this, ₹2 lakh is to be recovered from

the tehsildar concerned, in instalments from his salary, due to his direct involvement in the misconduct. The remaining ₹8 lakh is to be paid by the State within eight weeks of the order's presentation.

The case pertains to a community hall built on grazing land in Balasore, partly funded by government schemes and used by the public. On December 14, 2024, the hall was demolished by local authorities just a day after the High Court issued a stay order, making the action illegal. The authorities provided no emergency justification for its action.

"The office of the tehsildar is not a mere administrative post—it is a constitutional responsibility, especially in matters involving enforcement at the grassroots level," the court observed and directed the initiation of departmental proceedings against the revenue officer

NHRC seeks report on boycott of tribal family

Bhubaneswar: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Wednesday sought a report from the state government about the alleged social boycott threat on a tribal family after a female member of it married a man belonging to a scheduled caste in Rayagada district. The NHRC in a release said that it was reported that the villagers demanded a purification ritual if the family of the woman wanted to be accepted back into the community. P5

Berhampur man falls into open drain, dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, June 25: The menace of open drains has returned to haunt residents here as a 55-year-old man drowned after being swept away in an uncovered drain here, Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Mahendra Panigrahi of Kharavela Nagar under Nimakhandi police limits in the city. Locals recovered the body near the drain close to MKCG Medical College and Hospital playground under Baidyanathpur police limits.

The incident occurred after the area witnessed torrential rain Wednesday. Passersby spotted the body floating near MKCG Medical College playground and rushed him to the hospital by auto-rickshaw. Police arrived after being informed of the incident.

Photos of the scene went viral on social media, prompting Mahendra's son Siddhant Panigrahi and other family members to reach the hospital and identify the body. Police said a post-mortem examination will be conducted after the formal inquest. Family members told police



that Mahendra had left home on his scooter in the afternoon. Due to heavy rain, the roads were flooded, and he may have failed to notice the open drain. Police said an investigation is ongoing to establish the exact location of the accident and recover the scooter.

This is the second such tragedy in the southern city in less than a year. On August 21 last year, a student returning home from tuition on his bicycle fell into an uncovered drain and drowned after losing sight of the road during heavy rain. His body was recovered the next day.

Numerous uncovered drains continue to pose serious hazard across the city, and neither the Works department nor the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) has taken adequate measures to address the issue.

What a ride, says Shukla, 2nd Indian in space

Shukla is set to become the first Indian astronaut to visit the International Space Station, with the docking of the Dragon spacecraft expected at 4.30pm IST today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 25: "Kya kamaal ki ride thi (what an amazing ride)," India's astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla, who goes by the call sign 'Shux', remarked as SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft entered the orbit around the earth within 10 minutes of launch from NASA's spaceport in Florida.

Shukla, who became the second Indian to travel to space, spoke in chaste Hindi to announce India's return to

space after a gap of 41 years, and urged everyone to be a part of his journey.

"The Tiranga (Tricolour) on my shoulders tells me that I am not alone and I am with all of you," the 39-year-old fighter pilot-turned-astronaut said in his first remarks from the earth's orbit.

"Namaskar, my dear countrymen. What a ride! We have returned to space after a gap of 41 years and what an amazing ride it was ('kya kamaal ki ride thi')," he said.

"We are orbiting the earth at a speed of 7.5 km per second. This is not just the beginning of my journey to the International Space Station, but the beginning of India's human space programme and it is my desire that all the countrymen become a part of this journey," Shukla said.

"Your chest, too, should swell with pride... Together, let's embark on this journey of India's Human Space Programme. Jai Hind! Jai Bharat," Shukla said.

Shukla scripted history by embarking on a space odyssey

along with three others to the International Space Station as part of a commercial mission by Axiom Space Wednesday, 41 years after astronaut Rakesh Sharma's 1984 spaceflight on-board a Russian spacecraft.

The Dragon spacecraft -- named Grace by the astronauts -- is expected to dock at the International Space Station at 4.30pm IST Thursday. The 14-day mission on board the ISS will realise the return to human spaceflight for India, Poland and Hungary.



leisure



HELEN MIRREN'S TIPS ON STAYING FOREVER YOUNG

English actress Helen Mirren is sharing tips for youngsters to keep looking young forever. The actress has said that young people should stay away from smoking and they should try everything. The acclaimed actress is set to turn 80 next month but looks much younger than her advancing years, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.

JOHN CENA REVEALS HIS NUMBER ONE PASSION

WWE star turned actor John Cena has revealed neither wrestling nor his blossoming Hollywood career is his passion. He told *Extra*: "My number one passion is my wife. Absolutely, that is first on the list. I'd say right behind that is my health so I can be the best husband to my wife."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today you will have an eye for beautiful and outlandish things. There is a possibility that you may even contemplate starting a business related to these things. Ganesha feels, though, that you will not be able to reach any conclusion about it. But you will keep the option open.

TAURUS
You can expect a pleasant, comfortable day at the office, today, so says Ganesha. You will be carrying out your work cheerfully and effortlessly. You could, later in the evening, have a strong urge to go out for dinner with your family and friends. If that does happen, you're certain to go for an after dinner movie, or an ice cream treat.

GEMINI
Today will be a day filled with energy and enthusiasm. You will have an optimistic view of life and this will help you attain success. You will be able to exercise your free will and take up tasks to your liking. While the day will be busy, it will also be rewarding, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Sentimentalism will be hinder your path of success. So, says Ganesha, give up too much sentimentalism. It can be quite a hazard in the future. You will win over people with the force of speech and polite approach.

LEO
You will be filled with extraordinary self-confidence today. You will be able to take firm decisions when it comes to work related issues. You will not face any difficulties in completing your tasks today, and will achieve success. You need to guard against getting into any confrontations with your father or other elders, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
In all likelihood, you will be eager to grab the monetary challenges that come your way, as they only enhance your desire for success. You will bring up new ideas and better methods of tackling the challenges on hand. Ganesha gives you an assurance that your present business views will do you a world of good.

LIBRA
Some days you get the carrot, while on others, it is the stick! Today is going to be one of those 'stick' days when it comes to dealing with your seniors, foresees Ganesha. It would be wise to delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Sometimes, waiting patiently is the best policy, especially if you are a job aspirant. Do not expect immediate success.

SCORPIO
You may be in a mood to build castles in the air today, says Ganesha. You may be caught up in a whirlpool of thoughts and nostalgia. However, you will soon realise that the time once gone, never comes back and so, you make up for the lost time by beginning the new chapter of your life from today itself.

SAGITTARIUS
Get ready to rule hearts today. Your thoughtful insights into other people's psyche might just help you write a book on it! In the battleground of love, you will win over your sweetheart all over again, probably with a nice, slow dance coupled with a fantastic candlelit dinner.

CAPRICORN
Your lover is in for many pleasant surprises today. You'll be in a completely romantic mood, making every wish of your sweetheart your command. Both of you will go shopping, and have fun. Extravagant expenditures will keep you charged up for the day. You will achieve what you had wanted, that is the happiness of your sweetheart.

AQUARIUS
You will hit the bull's eye, today. From the smallest to the biggest, all of your plans will turn into reality. Don't get disheartened if there are some obstacles on your path; you are fully armed to face the challenges and come out triumphant. Get yourself in the top gear, you will surely succeed, says Ganesha.

PISCES
Your planetary configuration not being favorable, you are advised not to start any new projects today. The benefits accrued by any project you take up today might not justify the risks associated with it. Businessmen need to be extra careful in all their dealings. Personal life should be peaceful with Ganesha's blessings.

Wamiqa on rivalry talks

MUMBAI: Admired for her powerful on-screen persona and remarkable range as an actor, Wamiqa Gabbi continues to make a name for herself in the entertainment industry. The actress talked candidly about her approach to industry collaboration and personal development. Wamiqa thinks that actors with similar career paths should support one another and remain focused on their own development as an artist rather than seeing them as competitors.

Wamiqa discussed her realistic and sympathetic perspective on competition and success in an interview with Instant Bollywood. "So you

know for an artist, the most important thing is to empathize and it's very important," she said, reflecting on her values as a performer. "What do I need to feel threatened by somebody who I feel has kind of a similar journey as mine? I wish that we all rise together."

Her mature statement, which has become a defining characteristic of her career in the film and OTT industries, is insightful.

Playing one of Geet's cousins in the blink-and-you-miss-it role in *Jab We Met* marked the beginning of Wamiqa's career. Even though the role was brief, the aspiring actor gained invaluable experience from watching director Imtiaz Ali and the cast closely and eagerly taking part in the film-making process.

AGENCIES



Esha reacts to being called sex symbol

MUMBAI: Esha Gupta has never shied away from speaking her mind, and in a recent interview, she did just that—taking on the long-standing label of being a 'sex symbol' in Bollywood.

The actress clarified that the stereotype of being a "sex symbol" wasn't something she created for herself—it was imposed by others. She emphasized that it wasn't the media's fault either, but rather the people who influence the narratives fed to the media. Reflecting on the label, she questioned its meaning, pointing out that something like the Kamasutra represents a symbol of sex, not a person like her.

She went on to say that if people label her a sex symbol, it's only because of what she was naturally born with—something, she added, that's not entirely in her control. While she didn't see the title as entirely negative, she didn't view it as a compliment either. The constant stereotyping, she admitted, took a toll on her self-esteem, leaving her feeling underconfident about her appearance.

On the work front, Esha, who made her Bollywood debut opposite Emraan Hashmi in *Jannat 2*, was last seen in the popular web series *Aashram* alongside Bobby Deol.

AGENCIES

MUMBAI: Dangal fame Bollywood actor Fatima Sana Shaikh has an exciting line up of films in her kitty. However, there is another reason why Fatima has been in the news is her relationship status. This is because lately rumours have been rife about Fatima and Vijay Varma, the new man in her life. According to buzz, Tamannaah and Vijay broke up in February this year after which the latter found love again in Fatima. But how true is this rumour?

Not one bit. At least that's what Fatima's latest statement suggests. At the trailer launch of her film *Aap Jaisa Koi*, which also stars R Madhavan, Fatima squashed link-up rumours once and for all by revealing that she is single. Talking about what makes a relationship 'equal', Fatima stated, "The one where

a successful relationship." When asked if she has found someone similar to this description in real life, the actor replied, "Acche ladke hai hi nai yaar.. Koi bhi nahi hai (meri life mein) Filmon mein acche hote hai."

AGENCIES

Fatima squashes link-up rumours

AGENCIES



two people respect each other, listen to each other's thoughts and opinions. Both will have to make equal compromises. When you are in partnership you work towards the relationship without losing yourself. I think that is the way to

Trouble mounting for Dosanjh

MUMBAI: The controversy surrounding Diljit Dosanjh and his upcoming film is catching fire at a brisk pace. After slamming the actor-singer, the All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA), has now demanded the immediate suspension of all social media accounts of him in India.

In a letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, AICWA has also demanded removal of all his songs and movies from platforms like YouTube, Spotify, JioSaavn & OTT platforms, permanent ban on his live concerts and public performances across India. The association has al-

so called for full investigation into the funding of *Sardaar Ji 3*, and nationwide ban on its release. They have also appealed to the Chairman of CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification) to reject certification of all future films involving Dosanjh and to boycott him completely from Indian cinema.

AGENCIES



Earlier, Suresh Shyamal Gupta, the president of the All Indian Cine Workers Association had issued a statement calling for nationwide boycott of the film, and has also urged artists across the film industries of India to not engage with Diljit in any capacity for any project including live events.

He said in a statement, "Despite knowing the recent brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, in which 26 innocent Indian lives were lost at the hands of Pakistani-sponsored terrorists, Diljit Dosanjh has shockingly chosen to cast a Pakistani artist. This decision comes at a time when the entire nation, 140 crore Indians, the government, the opposition, and citizens across all walks of life, are united against Pakistan and standing in solidarity with the families of the martyred".

AGENCIES

PEANUTS



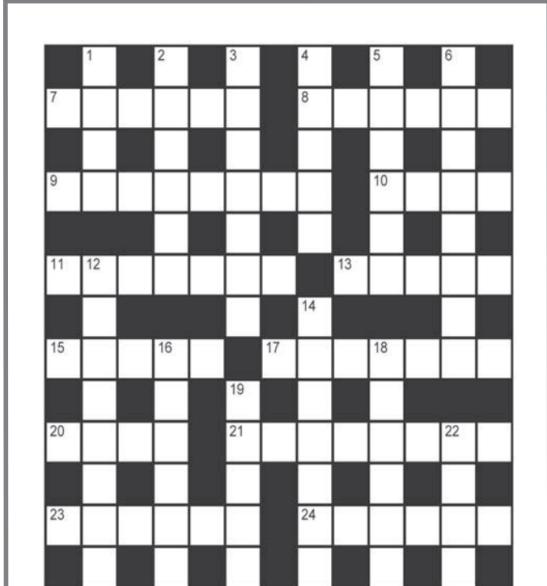
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN POST CROSSWORD



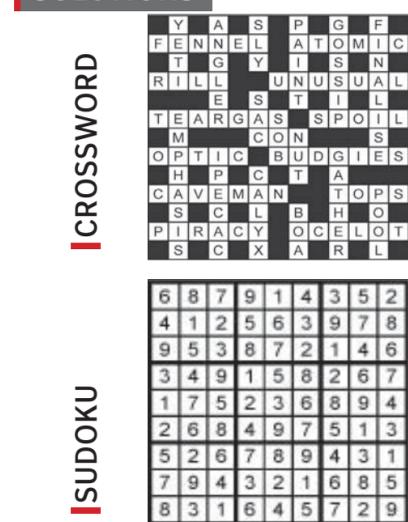
- Across**
- 7 Kind of occasion
 - 8 Penny-pinching
 - 9 Gala affair
 - 10 Fair attraction
 - 11 Maneuvers
 - 13 Noisy bird
 - 15 Deadly
 - 17 Drip
 - 20 Greek cheese
 - 21 Infringe upon
 - 23 Wealth
 - 24 Lunatic
 - Down**
 - 1 Exploding star
 - 2 Australian marsupial
 - 3 Flightless bird
 - 4 Many, many times
 - 5 County on the Thames
 - 6 Court game
 - 12 Scholarly
 - 14 Former Greek money
 - 16 Indifference
 - 18 Sign of rain, maybe?
 - 19 Honkers
 - 22 Rugged rock

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Ex-banker gets 2-yr RI for ₹85L fraud

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 25: A court in Kendrapara district Wednesday sentenced a former cashier of a nationalised bank's Singiri branch under Aul police station to two years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) for embezzling ₹85 lakh of the deposit money in the bank.

Abhiram Mallick, in his capacity as cashier, resorted to fraudulent practice and embezzled around ₹85 lakh deposited money from the account holders. The investigation by the local police found that the accused carried out multiple unauthorised transfers to siphon off the amount, by debiting funds from the accounts. Pronouncing the verdict, the judge Deban Satyadarshi Nanda convicted the accused to two-year RI under Sections 406, 467 and 471 of IPC after relying on the evidence of six witnesses, said Brundaban Nanda, the public prosecutor.

BHARTIYA RAIL: AT THE SERVICE OF RATH YATRA PILGRIMS



ASHWINI VAISHNAV

The holy city, the abode of Mahaprabhu, Jagannath Puri, is ready for the Rath Yatra.

It is a journey of faith for the millions of devotees coming from across the globe. And Bhartiya Rail is at the service of these pilgrims, facilitating their overall experience in the Shreekshetra Puri.

Last 11 years have been historic for Odisha's railway

infrastructure development. Under PM Shri Narendra Modi's Purvodaya policy, Odisha's railway budget allocation has seen a twelve-time jump to over ₹10,500 crore in 2025-26 as compared to the annual average during 2009-14. Since 2014, over 2,100 km of new tracks have been laid in Odisha - more than the entire rail network of Malaysia.

Approximately ₹73,000 crore worth of projects for constructing new tracks in Odisha are ongoing. 59 Amrit stations are being developed, including 16 stations in aspirational districts. 6 Vande Bharat services covering 17 districts are operational.

The most special contribution of Indian Railways to Odisha is during the Rath Yatra. The railways undertakes the task of serving lakhs of Rath Yatra pilgrims every year.

Ease of travel for the pilgrims

There has been a four-time jump in the Rath Yatra special trains over the last 11 years. A total of 1,215 train services - 850 regular and 365 special train services - are being provided this year for Jagannath Puri. These services connect many districts of Odisha including aspirational districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir, Nuapada, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati and Dhenkanal and interior tribal regions to Shreekshetra Puri. An AI-based real-time demand prediction system has enabled dynamic scheduling. 10 platforms are welcoming the pilgrims this year. Additional ticket counters have also been set up at Puri as well as other railway stations.

A comfortable visit for a divine experience

With the spirit of Seva Par-

amo Dharma, Bhartiya Rail ensures dignity, comfort, and security of the pilgrims during the Rath Yatra. This year marks one of the largest facilitation drives for inclusive pilgrimage travel.

Railways is ready to cater to around 20 lakh passengers with a daily peak of 2 lakh. A holding space with a capacity to accommodate 25,000 pilgrims has been designated. Adequate arrangements have been made to provide relief from the hot weather. Sufficient food stalls, water booths and coolers have been arranged. An estimated 2.5 lakh free meals will be served to the pilgrims.

Sanitation and cleanliness arrangements including modern jet cleaning machines and sewage suction trucks are also in place. A much larger pool of security personnel have been deployed for ensuring safety

and security of the pilgrims. They will be supported with CCTVs, drones, and face recognition systems. Accessibility needs of Divyangjans, elderly, women, and medically-vulnerable pilgrims have also been taken care of. Medical booths with doctors and paramedics, ambulances, and first-aid counters have been set up. This year, Indian Railways has converted Puri station into a model of inclusive and faith-centred public service.

Special railway jacks for a special cause

A team of Indian Railways including engineers and technicians is also deployed at the Rath Yatra. This team is responsible for ensuring smooth movement and repair work of the chariots during the Yatra. The team assists in transporting the massive chariots from

the construction site to Shree Jagannath temple.

The railways team uses the special screw jacks for ensuring proper positioning, alignment, and forward movement of the chariots on the designated path. It also helps in removing any obstacles and maintaining adequate distance between the chariots. The team accompanies the chariots till the completion of the Yatra. Bhartiya Rail is fondly called as the lifeline of the nation. It remains committed to the service of all Indians including the pilgrims who consider Rath Yatra as their lifeline.

The author is Union Minister for Railways, Electronics & Information Technology and Broadcasting, Government of India

Rath Yatra: Puri turns fortress



PNN & AGENCIES

Puri, June 25: The seaside pilgrim town of Puri Wednesday turned into a fortress, with deployment of over 10,000 security personnel, including NSG (National Security Guard) snipers, for the annual Rath Yatra of the sibling deities beginning June 27.

The security personnel participated in a rehearsal to prepare themselves to handle the lakhs of devotees, who will arrive in the town from every nook and cranny of the country and abroad to get a glimpse of the Trinity - Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra.

The deities come out of the 12th-century shrine once a year to mingle with devotees cutting across caste, creed and religion.

As this year's Rath Yatra will be held post-Pahalgam terror attack, security arrangements have been made keeping different aspects in view, a senior police officer said.

"An integrated command and control room has been set up in Puri for the first time. Around 275 AI-enabled CCTV cameras have been installed along the route between Uttara Chhak and Puri town and between Puri and Konark. Live

visuals from these cameras will be monitored round-the-clock." Director General of Police (DGP) Yogesh Bahadur Khurania said after giving the final touch to the security arrangements for the mega festival.

Khurania said the AI-powered surveillance system will keep a watch on traffic movements, crowd surge and help security personnel make a prompt decision and face emergencies. Sub-control rooms have also been set up at key locations, the DGP said.

For the first time, NSG snipers have also been deployed on the rooftops of buildings given the threat assessment, while anti-drone technology and police-operated drones will also be in use for aerial surveillance, the DGP said, adding that anti-sabotage teams, bomb squads and dog squads are also in place.

Over 10,000 security personnel deployed for the festival comprise Odisha Police and eight companies of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).

To ensure foolproof security on sea front, arrangements have been made with deployment of Odisha's Marine Police, Coast Guard, and Indian Navy, he said.

A real-time chatbot application has also been launched to assist visitors with information on park-

ing availability, route maps, and directions to vacant parking lots, Khurania said.

Expecting congregation of around 15 lakh people on the Day 1 and 2 of the festival, the DGP emphasised that priority will be given to proper service and security of the devotees.

"Extensive arrangements have been made for the orderly darshan of the devotees. Experienced police officers have been deployed for Rath Yatra duty," he said.

Director of Intelligence RP Koche said since Srimandir is located in a high-security zone, its importance increases significantly during the Rath Yatra.

Besides, special security arrangements have been made for Gundicha temple and the three chariots, Koche said.

Additional Director General (ADG) of Police (Modernisation) Soumendra Priyadarshi said appropriate arrangements have been made to control the crowd.

ADG (Law and Order) Sanjay Kumar said that the cooperation of the officers/staff of the police administration is essential for the orderly completion of the Rath Yatra.

The Rath Yatra will begin June 27 and end with deities returning to Srimandir July 8.

Veteran actor Narayan Pati passes away

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Veteran actor and director Narayan Pati breathed his last during treatment at a private hospital in the City, Wednesday. He was admitted to the hospital Tuesday evening.



A National School of Drama (NSD) alumnus, Pati was celebrated for his versatility and depth in acting. His last film was 'Bou Ra Hatabaksha'. Beginning his career in 1971, Pati featured in several films across different languages. His performances in 'Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe' (1971), 'Lakhe Shiva Puji Paichhi Pua' (1994), 'Gare Sindura Dhare Luha' (2001), and 'Arjun' (2005) received critical acclaim and established him as a respected figure in Indian theatre and cinema.

Guv, CM congratulate Shukla

POST NEWS NETWORK



Bhubaneswar, June 25: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday congratulated Group Captain Subhanshu Shukla on being part of the prestigious Axiom-4 space mission.

Taking to X, Governor Odisha said, "Congratulations to Group Captain #ShubhanshuShukla on becoming India's second astronaut in space after 41 years... His journey aboard #AxiomMission4 embodies the spirit of New India - bold, ambitious, and visionary. A proud moment for our nation!"

Similarly, the Chief Minister, in a social media post, said, "Heart-

iest congratulations to Group Captain Subhanshu Shukla on being part of the prestigious Axiom-4 space mission. His participation marks a proud milestone for the nation and reflects the excellence, discipline, and commitment of the Indian Air Force."

"As India strengthens its presence in global space exploration, this achievement will inspire countless young minds across the country. Wishing him and

the entire mission team a safe and successful journey," Majhi added.

Shukla was Wednesday headed to the International Space Station (ISS) on a historic odyssey marking India's return to human spaceflight after a gap of 41 years following a successful launch of the Axiom Space mission in the US with a four-member multi-country crew.

The astronauts will spend 14 days at the ISS and conduct 60 scientific experiments during their mission. The commercial mission by Axiom Space, a US-based startup, is expected to contribute to microgravity research in areas including human physiology, nutrition, and seed germination in space.

CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

BJD student, youth wings stage demo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Members of the student and youth wings of Opposition BJD Wednesday boycotted classes, staged demonstrations on streets and burnt effigies, protesting the rise in crimes against women, including the gangrape of a 20-year-old college student on Gopalpur beach in Ganjam district earlier this month.

The BJD, headed by former chief minister Naveen Patnaik, had given the



statewide students' strike call.

Holding placards and wearing black badges, the agitators raised slogans against the state's BJP government and accused it of failing to provide security

to women of all ages.

Apart from Utkal University and different colleges of Bhubaneswar, students also blockaded roads and staged protests in Cuttack, Puri, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Balasore,

Koraput, Sambalpur and other districts.

However, there was no report of any violence from anywhere, police said, adding that the students and youths expressed their displeasure over the rise in rapes.

BJD leaders, including MLAs, former ministers and ex-MPs, also participated in the agitations and addressed gatherings.

All of them criticised the state government over the prevailing law and order situation.

DSPL-145



ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ସମୟରେ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟରକ୍ଷା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ମାର୍ଗଦର୍ଶିକା

ମହାପ୍ରଭୁ ଶ୍ରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ଓ ବାହୁଡ଼ା ଯାତ୍ରା ଚଳିତ ବର୍ଷ ଜୁନ୍ ୨୭ ତାରିଖରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇ ଜୁଲାଇ ୭ ତାରିଖରେ ଶେଷ ହେବ । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ପୁରୀ, କେନ୍ଦ୍ରାପଡ଼ା, ବାରିପଦା, କେଉଁଝର, କୋରାପୁଟ ଆଦି ପ୍ରମୁଖ ସ୍ଥାନମାନଙ୍କରେ ପ୍ରବଳ ଜନସମାଗମ ହେବ । ବର୍ଷା ଦିନ ଆସିଯାଇଥିବାରୁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସଂକ୍ରାମକ ରୋଗର ଆଶଙ୍କା ଏ ବର୍ଷ ଅଧିକ ଥିବାର ଅନୁଭୂତ ହେଉଛି । ଏଥିରୁ ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇବା ପାଇଁ ନିମ୍ନ ଲିଖିତ ସତର୍କତା ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ପାଳନ କରିବା ବିଧେୟ ।

- ପିଇବା ପାଇଁ ଫୁଟାପାଣି/ କିଟ୍ଟିଂ ପାଉଡର ଦ୍ୱାରା ବିଶୋଧିତ ପାଣି/ ହାଲୋଜେନ୍ ବଟିକା ଦ୍ୱାରା ବିଶୋଧିତ ପାଣି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତୁ
- ଖାଇବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ, ଖାଦ୍ୟ ରାନ୍ଧିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏବଂ ଶୌଚ ହେବା ପରେ ଭଲଭାବରେ ସାବୁନରେ ହାତ ଧୁଅନ୍ତୁ
- ଖୋଲା ବିକ୍ରି ହେଉଥିବା ଖାଦ୍ୟ /ବାସି ଖାଦ୍ୟ/ପଚା ଫଳମୂଳ/ ଦହିବରା, ଗୁପଚୁପ, ସରବତ, ଲସି ଆଦି ଗ୍ରହଣ କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ
- ଅଣ୍ଡା କାଶ, ଜ୍ୱର, ଝାଡ଼ା କିମ୍ବା ବାନ୍ତି ଆଦି ଲକ୍ଷଣ ଥିବା ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି, ବୟୋକୃଙ୍କ, ଭିନ୍ନକ୍ଷମ, ଗୁରୁତର ଅସ୍ତ୍ରାଣୁ ଥିବା ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଭିତ୍ତି ମଧ୍ୟକୁ ନଥାସି ଚିଡ଼ି ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ଦେଖନ୍ତୁ
- ଖରା ହେଉଥିଲେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଚୋପି / ଓଦା ଗାମୁଛା ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତୁ
- ରାତ୍ର ରହଣି ଥିଲେ ଶୋଇବା ବେଳେ ମଶାରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତୁ
- ଅସ୍ତ୍ରାଣୁ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ନିକଟସ୍ଥ ଆଶୁ ଚିକିତ୍ସା କେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ପରାମର୍ଶ କରନ୍ତୁ
- ଆୟୁଲାନୁ ସେବା ପାଇଁ ୧୦୮ ଏବଂ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ସୂଚନା ପାଇଁ ୧୦୪ କୁ ଦେୟମୁକ୍ତ ଫୋନ୍ କରନ୍ତୁ

OIPR-10003/13/0216/2526

ECoR gears up for smooth Rath Yatra

Preparations ramped up at Puri Railway Station for safe, hassle-free travel for Rath Yatra devotees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 25: As Puri gears up for the grand Rath Yatra, East Coast Railway (ECoR) is undertaking extensive, coordinated preparations to ensure smooth travel and safety for the lakhs of devotees expected to attend the annual festival. ECoR general manager Parmeshwar Funkwal inspected Puri Railway Station Wednesday to review the comprehensive arrangements focused on passenger comfort, crowd management, and infrastructure readiness.

To handle the surge in passenger traffic, ECoR is running over 365 special trains from key states including Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

Puri Railway Station, the spiritual hub during the festival, has undergone major upgrades with newly established Pilgrim Waiting Areas and Mela Sheds that can accommodate up to 20,000 devotees. These zones are equipped with covered seating, drinking water booths, modular toilets, mobile charging points, shaded rest areas, and medical first-aid sta-



tions with ambulance support, an official said.

Digital infrastructure has been significantly enhanced, with real-time train and crowd updates provided through LED displays, public announcements, and the dedicated "ECoR Yatra" app. To assist pilgrims, help desks and "May I Help You" counters have been set up at key locations. Digital ticketing is also being actively promoted via the UTS app, ATMs with facilitators, and mobile ticket counters.

Additionally, 34 booking counters at Puri and 35 more at junctions like Bhubaneswar, Khurda Road, Cuttack, Brahmapur, and Bhadrak have been set up to ease ticketing congestion.

Security arrangements have been significantly ramped up with the deployment of Railway Protection Force (RPF), Government Railway Police (GRP), Scouts and Guides, and dual-layer ticket checks. Sur-

veillance has been strengthened with 250 CCTV cameras, drones, sniffer dogs, face recognition systems, and fire tenders. Ten entry gates at the station have been fortified with barricades and manual frisking systems, while major junctions are under close watch through a "fortress check" mechanism.

In terms of amenities, pilgrims will have access to Janata meals, snacks, water bottles, and OSOP (One Station One Product) stalls that display local crafts, handlooms, and appliqué work. Temporary food stalls have also been set up at platforms and Mela Sheds to serve pilgrims.

ECoR is also prioritising cleanliness and medical support, with 24x7 sanitation staff, mobile toilets, jet-cleaning units, and waste management systems in place. Medical booths staffed with doctors and paramedics, supported by ambulances, are stationed at multiple points to handle any health emergencies.

Subhadra's next aid on Raksha Bandhan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 25: The fourth governing council meeting of the Subhadra Society, chaired by Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary Anu Garg, approved the release of the third installment of the Subhadra scheme on Raksha Bandhan, August 9. The meeting was held Wednesday at the conference hall of Lok Seva Bhawan.

The meeting also approved the administrative and associated expenditures of the scheme incurred so far. Additionally, a presentation was also made regarding the preparations and methodology of a study, titled 'Impact of Subhadra in Districts of Odisha' to be conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi.

In this context, detailed discussions were held on the impact of Subhadra assistance across all beneficiary categories, its utilisation, and digital financial inclusion. Following a prior decision, a field survey will be conducted from the first week of July by college girls (Subhadra reviewers) in collaboration with IIM-Sambalpur.

IIM-Sambalpur will provide full support for data collection, tools, training, and analysis. The meeting also focused on skill development for beneficiaries to ensure the effective use of Subhadra assistance, with collaborative discussions involving the Skill Development department.



PROTEST CLASH: Youth Congress activists clash with police during a protest near Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's residence in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, alleging a surge in violence against women in the state

Tourism, a catalyst for economic growth: Guv

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati underscored the transformative power of tourism in driving economic growth, calling it "one of the most vibrant and high-potential sectors" at the valedictory session of the 6th Odisha Tourism Conclave, organised by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) here Wednesday.

"Tourism plays a vital role not only in generating large-scale employment across sectors like hospitality, handicrafts, and transport, but also in infrastructure development and social inclusion," said the Governor, adding that the sector also contributes significantly to preserving cultural and natural heritage.

He praised HRAO for championing state's tourism po-

tential and stated, "Odisha's diverse attractions—from ancient temples and art to wildlife and scenic beauty—make it a truly compelling destination. I assure my full support in making Odisha a globally admired tourism hub."

The Governor noted improvements in connectivity, infrastructure, and sustainable transport, while stressing the development of 'Jagannath Dham' as a global spiritual destination. He also highlighted the need to promote Buddhist sites like Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, and Lalitgiri to Southeast Asian tourists.

"Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, tourism is now a national priority," he said, linking world-class tourism infrastructure with the goals of 'Viksit Odisha by 2036' and 'Viksit Bharat by 2047'.

Apollo launches 'CanWin' to support cancer warriors

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Apollo Cancer Centre (ACC), Bhubaneswar Wednesday marked National Cancer Survivors Month with the launch of 'CanWin'—a dedicated support group aimed at uniting cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, volunteers and medical professionals. The initiative offers a shared platform for emotional healing, mutual support and resilience.



The group's first event, 'Stories from the Stage,' featured moving personal accounts from cancer survivors who shared their journeys of resilience, treatment, and recovery.

"At ACC, we believe healing transcends medicine," said Alok Srivastava, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Medical Services. "With CanWin, we aim to nurture a community where courage is echoed, stories are medicine, and every voice matters," he added.

CM felicitates 108 democracy warriors

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Marking the 50th anniversary of the Emergency, the Odisha government observed "Constitution Murder Day 2025" at the Rail Auditorium here Wednesday. Organised by the Department of Odia Language, Literature, and Culture, the event saw Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and other dignitaries honour 108 democracy warriors who had stood against the Emergency.

The Chief Minister said, "We feel honoured to felicitate you." He added that after taking office, the government decided to recognise democracy warriors by providing a monthly



pension of ₹20,000 along with medical facilities. So far, 56 individuals have been approved for the pension, with the process ongoing for others. The CM assured that all eligible recipients would soon receive their benefits, and emphasised that democracy warriors would be

accorded the same respect as freedom fighters.

Describing the Emergency as a dark chapter in India's post-independence history, the CM said, "No one can forget the repression and unspeakable atrocities of that period. Observing this day is meant to

raise awareness against authoritarianism."

Odia Language, Literature, and Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said the current generation must be made aware of the mistakes made 50 years ago and learn from the errors of the past.

Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan remarked that the governance system during the Emergency created a "dark world" for everyone, stressing that the struggle of that era should serve as a valuable lesson today.

As part of the observance, a parade of democracy warriors, an art exhibition on Constitution Murder Day, and a chariot rally were inaugurated.

Odisha aims for 50% EV registrations by 2036

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 25: In a major push toward clean and sustainable mobility, the state government has set an ambitious target of achieving 50 per cent Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) in all new vehicle registrations by 2036. This target was a key focus during a high-level brainstorming session, jointly organised by the Commerce and Transport and Energy departments Wednesday to discuss the upcoming Odisha Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2.0.

The meeting was co-chaired by Commerce & Transport principal secretary Usha Padhee and Energy principal secretary Vishal Kumar Dev. Senior officials from both departments took part in comprehensive discussions aimed at advancing Odisha's electric mobility transition and achieving key targets. The EV vehicle registration is on the rise, marking a significant step from 1.16 per cent in 2021 to 8.71 per cent as of June 20, 2025.

Odisha currently has over 550 Public Charging Stations (PCS), including captive infrastructure operated by two-wheeler OEMs, DISCOMs, and oil marketing companies.

INT'L DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

Odisha community calls for a drug-free future

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 25: As Bhubaneswar joins the global observance of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking Thursday (June 26), the City itself is grappling with the very crisis the day aims to address. This year's theme, "Break the Cycle, Stop Organised Crime," resonates deeply in the Capital and surrounding areas, where juvenile arrests linked to narcotics—particularly brown sugar—are on the rise.

Recent investigations by local authorities have uncovered alarming trends: juvenile offenders caught with drugs worth lakhs were found to be part of a wider trafficking network with direct links to brown sugar suppliers in West Bengal and nearby regions. The findings point to the expanding influence of organised drug syndicates infiltrating both urban and rural areas of Odisha.

Speaking to **Orissa POST** on this occasion, Md Imran Ali, a noted de-addiction warrior, counselor, and Co-Founder of Salaam Jeevan, said, "Drug abuse and



trafficking have severely impacted our younger generation," he said. "The drug mafias are deliberately targeting youth, spreading their operations from cities into villages, and pushing minors into both consumption and distribution. The entire ecosystem—from families to schools—must function as a vigilant force."

The government and local administration must break the supply chain while expanding rehabilitation services, especially for women and children, he added.

Ali stressed the need for urgent reforms in enforcement, noting that the current implementation of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act remains weak.

Echoing this concern, Gatikrishna Satapathy, Convener of War Against Drugs Abuse (WADA), framed the crisis in broader societal terms: "Every parent dreams of a bright future for their child. But drugs are robbing us of that future—quietly and violently. Addiction destroys academic potential, family bonds, mental health,

and often pushes individuals into crime."

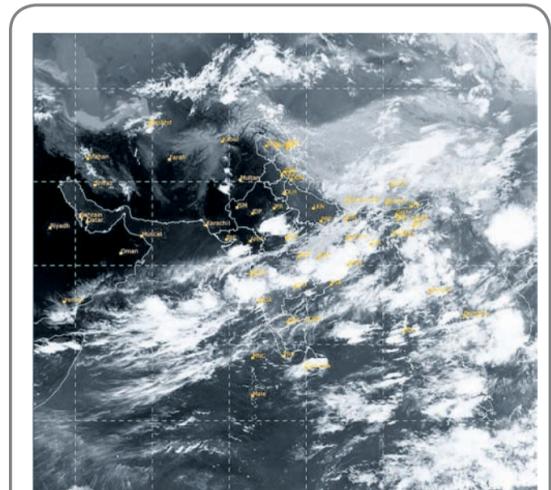
Satapathy called for a community-based prevention strategy rooted in awareness. "It's easier to avoid drugs than to quit them. Early education, strong family ties, and community vigilance are our best weapons. Prevention is not just better than cure—it is essential."

In a strong message from the authorities, Police Commissioner S Dev Datta Singh assured strict action against drug peddlers operating in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

"We will deal firmly with those trying to lure our youth into addiction. At the same time, we are committed to helping those who want to quit. Police will actively support rehabilitation efforts and work with agencies to ensure drug-free futures for our youth," Singh said.

As the City observes this crucial day, one message echoes loud and clear: The fight against drugs cannot be won in isolation. It demands unity, urgency, and unflinching resolve—from the government, civil society, families, and most importantly, the youth themselves.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	86.09 ▲ 0.02	SENSEX	82755.51 ▲ 700.40	GOLD	₹97,322 ▲ ₹299
EURO	99.94 ▲ 0.03	NIFTY	25244.70 ▲ 200.40	SILVER	₹105,457 ▲ ₹540



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	32.6°	33.4°	Cloudy sky with rain and thunderstorm
Min Temp	26.2°	24.5°	
Humidity	83%	84%	
Rainfall	0.6mm	2.8mm	

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Social boycott: NHRC seeks report from govt

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 25: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Wednesday sought a report from the state government about the alleged social boycott of a tribal family after a female member of it married a man belonging to a Scheduled Caste (SC) community in Rayagada district.

The apex rights panel, in a release, said that it was reported that the villagers demanded a purification ritual if the family of the woman wanted to be accepted back into the community. They were threatened with an indefinite boycott in case they refused to comply with the diktat.

Inter-caste marriages are traditionally prohibited in Rayagada tribal community, and marrying outside the caste is considered taboo.

Taking suo motu cognisance of a media report in this regard, the NHRC issued a notice to the Chief Secretary calling for a detailed report within two weeks.

The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise seri-



Members of a tribal woman's family in Rayagada succumbed to the diktat of the villagers, and the heads of 40 members of her extended family were tonsured, as per a media report

ous issues of violation of the human rights of the victims.

According to the NHRC, the June 21 media report said members of the woman's family succumbed to the diktat of the villagers, and as a part of the ritual, the heads of 40 members of her extended family were

tonsured.

Sources said that the incident took place June 19 at Baiganaguda village in Gora-khpur gram panchayat under Kashipur block. The matter came to the fore after a video of the ritual, showing men with tonsured heads, went viral on social media.

The woman, belonging to an ST community, married the SC man against her family's permission, causing resentment in the village.

Following a village meeting, it was suggested that the male members of the woman's extended family shave their heads and offer sacrifices of goats, chickens and pigs to the local deity.

The woman's family was allegedly warned of ostracism if they did not follow community norms.

After an inquiry, Rayagada district administration said its officials went to the village and met the families.

Both the bride's and groom's families informed the officials that they had no complaints and performed the rituals voluntarily.

Corruption mars PACS in Jajpur

DESPITE INITIATIVES AIMED AT IMPROVING THE WELFARE OF FARMERS THROUGH PACS, WIDESPREAD ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION HAVE EMERGED IN JAJPUR DISTRICT, WITH FARMERS CLAIMING THEY ARE BEING EXPLOITED AND DENIED BENEFITS UNLESS BRIBES ARE PAID

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, June 25: The state government has launched several schemes through Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) to ensure the all-round development of agriculture and farmers. However, most of the PACS in this district are reportedly mired in corruption. Despite repeated complaints and directives from higher authorities, departmental actions have remained few and far between, if the situation at Dharapur PACS under Bari block and Haripur PACS under Korei block is any indication.

Farmers have been alleging large-scale irregularities in paddy procurement, issuance of short-term crop loans based on forged land pattas and deductions in weight, while government benefits are denied if bribe is not paid.

Written complaints have been submitted to the state's Cooperation Minister. The office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies has directed the Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies (DRCS), Jajpur, to carry out a thorough investigation and submit a report



May 22, 2025.

Earlier complaints alleged harassment of poor farmers due to forgery in agricultural loan accounts. In 2022, departmental orders had barred PACS secretaries or managing directors from keeping loan passbooks or cheque books in their custody or using them personally. Regular inspections of passbooks, direct contact with borrowers, and SMS alerts regarding loan approvals were mandated, yet these measures are reportedly not being implemented effectively.

In Dharapur PACS, farmers including Ashis Kumar Jena,

Kshirod Kumar Jena, Manoj Kumar Sahu, Himanshu Jena, Mihir Kumar Pani and Srikanth Parida alleged that the president and secretary granted short-term crop loans to several ineligible individuals using forged land documents. In some instances, loans were granted to multiple persons against the same plot of land. Despite clear rules from Revenue department, they were reportedly ignored.

Although the government covers the costs of weighing and transporting paddy to mills, farmers were charged ₹40 per quintal. Even for clean

and dry paddy, they faced deductions ranging from five to 10 kg per quintal. The PACS president and secretary allegedly collect payments from millers at a rate of 2 kg per quintal.

The appointment of the current secretary is also under scanner, with accusations of forged educational qualifications while farmers have demanded verification of his academic credentials.

Similarly, in Haripur village, farmers have brought allegations of corruption under local PACS for over a decade. Only those who pay bribes reportedly receive recognition as farmers and access to government benefits. A single secretary is holding the office for more than 10 years and amassed substantial ill-gotten wealth through misappropriation of public funds.

Villagers are demanding the immediate transfer of the secretary and a vigilance probe against him.

When contacted, Jajpur DRCS officer Amulya Kumar Sethi said a proper investigation would be conducted, and actions, as deemed fit, would be taken following instructions from higher authorities.

Mishap claims man's life 2 days before wedding

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nilagiri, June 25: A road accident has claimed the lives of a man and his nephew, just two days before the former's scheduled wedding. The incident occurred early Wednesday morning in this area of Balasore district.

According to reports, the wedding of Harekrushna Mahalik, 32, of Gobara village under Narasinghpur panchayat, was scheduled for Friday. He was travelling in a car (MH 02 CR-6773) along with his nephew, Jyotishankar Mahalik, 20. They were supposed to pick up a friend from Sheragada Wednesday. However, a dumper (OD 01 G-4477) hit the car near Baligohiri Square on State Highway 19, which connects Sheragada-Nilagiri-Jharanaghati to Mayurbhanj district.

Harekrushna died on the spot while a critically injured Jyotishankar was rushed to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

The accident triggered tension in the area. Angry villagers and family members staged a road blockade demanding justice and compensation. Nilagiri tehsildar Sonam Das, SDPO Pramod Mallick and IIC Gobardhan Nayak reached the spot and assured strict action and compensation to the victims' families, following which the blockade was withdrawn.

KEREDAGARH JAGANNATH TEMPLE

Barrier separates devotees from Trinity



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, June 25: Even as preparations are in full swing for the annual Rath Yatra at the centuries-old Jagannath temple in Keredagarh under Rajnagar block of Kendrapara district, a sense of deprivation and sadness prevails among the devotees for the past 19 years when an iron barrier was placed at the Singha Dwar (main gate) of the temple following a dispute over darshan.

According to sources, many people have called for the removal of the physical barrier to seamless entry of devotees to the temple and smooth darshan of the deities.

Every year, a large number of devotees flock to the shrine to witness the annual Car Festival. However, the bitter reality still looms. The Singha Dwar, once a welcoming gateway for

devotees, now remains shut. Entry into the temple is barred, and offerings cannot be made directly to the deity. Worshipers can do little more than bow at the iron railing.

The trouble began in 2006 when a dispute arose over darshan by some Dalit devotees, who attempted to enter the shrine. Soon, a fracas ensued between the Dalit devotees and some upper caste people.

Following the incident, the temple remained closed for nine days and rituals were suspended.

At that time, Kanika royal Rabindra Narayan Bhanjadeo, the then Collector Kashinath Sahu, Superintendent of Police Shatrughna Parida, Baishi Mouza devotees and local police officials decided in a meeting that no devotees would be allowed inside the temple.

Devotees could only catch a

glimpse of the deities from outside and make offerings of dry and unpeeled coconut as prasad. This practice has continued since then, with devotees only being able to see the Trinity and offer prayers only when the deities come out on chariots on the day of Rath Yatra.

Meanwhile, Kanika royal family is overseeing the arrangements for Rath Yatra, with craftsmen known as Viswakarma working on the Nandighosha chariot, which is now in its final stage of construction. The temple is one of the most revered shrine in the region.

A day later, devotees will catch a glimpse of the deities in their 'Nabajoubana Beshan' (rejuvenated youthfulness) after the Anasara period. Anticipation is high among followers for this sacred ritual.

When contacted, Kanika royal scion Shibendu Narayan Bhanjadeo said that after the Rath Yatra, all sections of devotees will be invited, and necessary steps will be taken. Responding to the issue, the temple's chief priest Madan Mohan Rath said, "God is incomplete without devotees," and assured that discussions would soon take place to ensure there will be no restrictions for future generations.

Neglect hinders Boudh's rise as tourist hub

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, June 25: Named after Lord Buddha, the historically significant Boudh district remains neglected as a tourist destination despite possessing abundant natural beauty, ancient heritage, and deep-rooted cultural traditions.

Though small in size, Boudh is richly endowed with scenic landscapes and ecological diversity, making it an ideal destination for eco-tourism. The district boasts of ancient temples, historical relics, and sites of religious importance that could attract both tourists and researchers. However, due to continued neglect and lack of promotion, Boudh remains absent from mainstream tourism circuits.

Among the five protected monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India in western Odisha, two notable ones are located in Boudh - the intricately carved Gandharadi Temple built in the 8th century by the Bhanja kings, and the Rameswar Temple constructed in the 9th century by the Somavamsi dynasty, in Boudh town. These sites offer immense scope for heritage tourism and archaeological exploration.



to several Buddha relics and statues, including one in the earth-touching mudra near the old palace. Buddhist sites in Paragalpur and Syamsundarpur further underscore the district's importance as a Buddhist centre. If these sites were developed, Boudh could emerge as a major religious and cultural tourism hub, boosting the local economy, experts say.

Religious sites such as the famed Maa Bhairabi temple in Purunakatak, the Shiva temples in Ramgarh and Karadi, and several lesser-known locations across Harabhanga and Kantamal blocks hold untapped potential. The proposed eco-park 'Nandanban' at Birnaras-

inghpur in Harabhanga block, with 1,300.44 acres already demarcated and partial work completed, now faces uncertainty due to stalled progress.

Other notable attractions include the ancient Nayakpada cave complex, the hilly Dedhasura-Bhaibohu site under Kantamal block, medicinal garden at Dambarugada, the scenic beauty of Khandikanpara, and historic temples at Baunsuni, Baghiapada, and within the Mahanadi river basin. The submerged Hanuman temple, and temples dedicated to Jagannath, Bhairavi, and Chandrachuda also contribute to the district's spiritual appeal.

The Mahanadi river itself offers immense eco-tourism opportunities, especially with a bridge already constructed to the river island of Marjakud. Sites like the Padmatola Wildlife Sanctuary, Nuapada Dam, and Damkuchh Dam add to the district's landscape of potential attractions.

Despite a strong foundation for tourism, Boudh continues to be overlooked due to lack of attention, infrastructure, and promotional efforts. Proper development and marketing of these sites could significantly enhance the district's tourism profile and strengthen its economy.

District tourism officer Prabhakar Kanhar confirmed that proposals have been sent to higher authorities for developing Dedhasura-Bhaibohu hill and Biramunda under Kantamal block, and Khandikanpara under Boudh block. "We are awaiting approval, and gradually, development plans for other tourist sites will also be carried out," Kanhar said.

Stakeholders and tourism experts say that with proper planning, conservation and promotion, Boudh could transform into a significant cultural and eco-tourism destination, generating employment and boosting the local economy.



DIVINE JOURNEY: Chariots being readied for the nine-day annual Rath Yatra at Sector-3 Ahirbandha in Rourkela, Wednesday

Gajasathi killed in jumbo attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhendipada, June 25: In a tragic incident, a Gajasathi (member of an elephant squad) was killed in elephant attack while driving a herd away from Dangadhar Sahi, Katada Bhagirathipur village under Jarpada forest range in Angul district late Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Jugal Nayak of Katada village. The incident sparked tension in the area as kin and locals demanded compensation by putting up the body at the spot for over 10 hours.

Jarpada Ranger Madhav Nayak, ACF Krushna Chandra Sahu, Jarpada IIC Manoj

Kumar Pradhan accompanied by forest and police personnel reached the spot and tried to placate the agitators.

The agitators relented after Jarpada ranger announced compensation as per government norms and service to the next of his kin. Later, the Jarpada police handed over the body to the kin after a post-mortem.

The incident occurred when the Gajasathis were driving away an elephant herd which had strayed into Dangadhar Sahi area when Nayak came face to face with an elephant. The animal picked him on its tusk and battered him to the ground resulting in his death.

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E-tender No. CMSSBPLP252701A
Date: 20.06.2025

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CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF (A) MEDICINES, (B) SURGICAL ITEMS & (C) CONSUMABLES, AGAINST DAY TO DAY LOCAL PURCHASE FOR DIVISIONAL RAILWAY HOSPITAL, SAMBALPUR FOR A PERIOD OF 02 (TWO) YEARS FROM THE DATE OF COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONTRACT. RATE OF DISCOUNT IN PERCENTAGE OR AGAINST RUPEE 01 TO BE QUOTED FOR EACH GROUP SEPARATELY BY THE BIDDER.

Approximate procurement value during the year 2024-25 (per year): ₹ 9,60,000.00, EMD (₹): 38,400.00

Period of Contract : 02 (Two) years from the date of commencement of the work

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Chief Medical superintendent,
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THE MOTHER



An Iranian Bomb

Israel and the United States have dealt punishing blows to Iran's nuclear infrastructure. "Operation Rising Lion" and "Operation Midnight Hammer" have been portrayed as precision strikes that will stop the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme in its tracks. But whatever the bombings might have achieved tactically, they risk forfeiting strategically, as Iran is now more convinced than ever that nuclear weapons are the only way to deter future aggression and ensure the regime's survival.

Iran was once brought to the negotiating table through a carefully calibrated mix of pressure and incentives. Despite its imperfections, that approach worked. In 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was agreed, with Iran agreeing to limit its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief and other concessions. But – at Israel's urging and despite Iran's apparent compliance – Donald Trump abandoned the JCPOA during his first term as president, destroying whatever mutual trust had been built over the course of 20 months of painstaking diplomacy.

Now, despite pursuing new nuclear negotiations with Iran, the US has joined Israel in abandoning strategic patience in favour of spasmodic force. Some argue that Iran invited the attacks by deceiving the international community, stoking regional conflicts, and enriching uranium to levels well beyond those needed for any civilian application. These are legitimate complaints.

Even the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in a report released just before Israel's campaign began, raised concerns about Iran's compliance with its international obligations. Indeed, an analysis of this report by the Institute for Science and International Security argued that "Iran can convert its current stock of 60 percent enriched uranium into 233 kg of [weapon-grade uranium] in three weeks at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP), enough for 9 nuclear weapons." That conclusion may well have lit a fire under the Trump administration.

But the IAEA also concluded that it had "no credible indications of an ongoing, undeclared structured nuclear program" in Iran, while underscoring the urgency of reaching a nuclear deal. "Iran," the agency warned, "is the only non-nuclear-weapon state in the world that is producing and accumulating uranium enriched to 60 per cent" – just a short technical step away from the 90 per cent purity needed for weapons-grade material.

Even so, US and Israeli decision-makers greenlit attacks on Iranian nuclear sites at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan – facilities that are subject to IAEA safeguards and monitored under Iran's Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) commitments. With that, they unravelled the legal and verification framework that exists precisely to prevent weaponization.

Beyond undermining the authority of the IAEA and its inspection regime, the attacks violated the NPT's principle of peaceful nuclear use (Article IV) and breached international law, including the United Nations Charter. The US, a nuclear superpower with a record of catastrophic wars aimed at regime change, and Israel, a clandestine nuclear-armed state that refuses to sign the NPT, have thus sent an unmistakable message: only the weak follow rules, and only the strong are safe. In fact, as long as you have nuclear weapons, you can violate international law at will.

This is true not only for major powers, but also for smaller states. Pakistan, for example, nurtures cross-border terrorism and exports proxy war with impunity, threatening nuclear retaliation for anyone who crosses it. This poses a more acute threat to regional peace than Iran's hypothetical bomb, but the US remains silent.

This hypocrisy is deeply rooted. It was the US, after all, that aided and abetted Pakistan's covert pursuit of the bomb. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, successive US administrations ignored mounting evidence that Pakistan was secretly enriching uranium and building nuclear weapons – and continued funneling billions of dollars in aid to the country. The result is a fragile state armed with an "Islamic bomb."

Today, with diplomacy derailed, inspections discredited, coercion normalized, and double standards embraced, what tools remain to convince Iran that remaining non-nuclear is wise and strategically viable? After years of debate over the value of a nuclear deterrent – with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei even issuing religious edicts against nuclear weapons – Iranian decision-makers are almost certain to decide that there is no other way to keep the country safe from attack.

Iran now has every incentive to exit – or at least limit – the IAEA framework and race toward nuclear breakout. Just as Saddam Hussein took his nuclear program underground following Israel's 1981 bombing of Iraq's IAEA-monitored Osirak reactor, Iran is likely to reject transparency and oversight in favour of secrecy and ambiguity. That would not be some dramatic act of defiance, but rather a rational response to a serious – even existential – threat.

And it is not just Iran. If powerful states can bomb safeguarded nuclear facilities with impunity, why should any country put its faith in the global nonproliferation regime? Any government that wants to avoid the fate of Saddam's Iraq or Muammar el-Qaddafi's Libya (or, for that matter, democratic Ukraine), will seek to acquire the bomb – or at least come close enough to keep adversaries guessing.

The only viable path to nonproliferation is and always will be diplomacy, not destruction. Military strikes might slow down a nuclear program, but they cannot impose long-term restraint – especially when they are carried out by powers that flout the very rules they claim to be enforcing. In the end, Operation Rising Lion and Operation Midnight Hammer may be remembered not as preemptive strikes against Iran's nuclear breakout, but as catalysts for it.

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Studies and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.

TS ELIOT

Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

LAND USE AROUND AIRPORTS

FOCUS AVIATION

Air India Flight 171, a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner bound for London, took off from Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport on 12 June, only to plunge into a hostel of the BJ Medical College just 30 seconds later. The tragedy claimed 241 lives onboard and at least 39 on the ground, including medical students and a couple who stepped out to make an Aadhaar card correction just before the plane crashed in their neighbourhood, Meghani Nagar. This is a congested locality of buildings and slum pockets in the vicinity of the airport, causing many fatalities on the ground. Over 60 people from Meghani Nagar are being treated for injuries. While investigators look into a host of likely causes that range from engine and equipment failure to systemic problems and a breakdown in communications, the crash has drawn attention to other issues that need to be addressed: the chaos and growing congestion around many of our airports.



Lekha Rattanani

GLOBALLY, THERE IS A DEBATE ON WHERE AIRPORTS MIGHT BE LOCATED AND HOW LAND USE AROUND AIRPORTS NEEDS TO BE REGULATED

With the steady increase in air traffic and the consequent need for expanded airport infrastructure, interest in development and land use around airports is growing, with little regard for the impact in terms of safety issues and noise pollution on nearby populated areas. One way to reduce risks of damage or injury to persons or property on the ground due to aircraft accidents is to limit the density of development at or near airports. Studies have shown that accident probabilities increase with proximity to runway ends because of the greater concentration of aircraft, flying at low altitude, over these areas. Some airports and local communities have set development density limits ranging from 25 to 100 people per acre for various parts of a runway approach corridor. Shopping centres are likely to average about 75 people per acre and restaurants, over 100 people per acre. In general, high-density residential development and places of public assembly should not be permitted



Since a majority of air accidents occur either during take-off or landing, that makes it riskier to have airports in the midst of a bustling city

in the airport's approach corridors, says a chapter on "alternate land use" by the Airports Council International – North America in a document aimed at helping airports recognise and address the considerable challenges associated with such development in the vicinity.

Globally, there is a debate on where airports might be located and how land use around airports needs to be regulated. New airports set up far away from cities make the airport that much less accessible while legacy airports right in the thick of a city bring increased risks for aviation and for residents themselves. Since a majority of air accidents occur either during take-off or landing, that makes it riskier to have airports in the midst of a bustling city. While it is true that an accident of the kind seen in the case of AI-171 is rare and can technically happen anywhere, it is equally true that bustling neighbourhoods springing up on the outskirts of airports are best avoided.

That poses a challenge for India in particular because the aviation sector has grown rapidly in recent years, with the number of passengers growing from 66 million in 2014 to 161 million in 2024. Reports indicate that new airports are quickly turning out to be fully utilised to or beyond their designed capacity, driven by a growing economy and the growth of air traffic. Earlier this month Union Minister of

Civil Aviation K Rammoohan Naidu announced the country's plans to add 50 more airports in the next five years, building upon the existing 162 airports. For instance, the Navi Mumbai airport is being built to address the capacity constraints of the existing Mumbai airport, and its initial phase is expected to significantly increase the region's flight capacity. However, the nature of the market is such that housing prices in the vicinity of the new airport have already skyrocketed indicating that "development" follows, bringing a housing boom when an airport is built.

India's expanding aviation ambitions have been superimposed on existing urban infrastructures that are already pushed to the limit by the rapid growth of cities. In Ahmedabad, as in some other Indian cities there is little buffer between the increasingly busy airport and the densely populated neighbourhoods that encircle it. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has been trying to address this issue by seeking an allotment of nearly 30 acres of land to extend the safety area of the runway at the Sardar Vallabhai Patel (SVP) airport. This would enable the extension of the runway into Meghani Nagar where the Dreamliner crashed. The application placed before the Gujarat government in 2013 and 2018, is pending, according to reports. Frenetic and unregulated urban development have

found buildings and accompanying paraphernalia like billboards, poles, mobile towers and the like getting closer to runways. This is the subject of a court case against unauthorised buildings and structures that are potential flight hazards near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai. The Bombay High Court has called for the removal of obstructing structures.

Among the air hazards caused by building clusters outside airports are from birds attracted by garbage heaps and other food sources. AAI's Aeronautical Information Publication supplement for Mumbai International airport this month draws attention to the "daily concentration of birds in and around the vicinity of the aerodrome" especially between early morning hours and mid-day. The supplement that issues information, guidance and action requests "pilots to exercise caution during landing or take-off." Engine ingestion or windshield damage can lead to aborted take-offs and accidents. In September 2019 a Kolkata-bound Go-Air flight suffered a bird-hit minutes after take-off and had to return to SVP airport stranding passengers. A month earlier AAI had drawn the attention of civic authorities to landfills and garbage heaps near the airport attracting birds. That year SVP led all major Indian airports with nearly 11 wildlife strike incidents per 10,000 flights. The airport recorded 319 bird and wildlife strikes between January 2018 and October 2023, according to data tabled in Rajya Sabha.

None of this should hamper or digress from investigations into the specific case of the AI171 crash. If engines failed, as has been speculated in some quarters, it is a shocking case that demands urgent answers from Boeing and the engine manufacturers. But while that track of inquiry continues, the crash can also be an occasion to revisit land usage around airports.

The writer is the Managing Editor of The Billion Press. ©THE BILLION PRESS

SPECTRUM NATION

Deep economic faultlines

Global conflicts and disruptions have intensified, complicating growth for many nations, including India. According to World Bank's Global Economic Prospects, January 2025, the global economy is facing substantial headwinds, emanating largely from an increase in trade tensions and heightened global policy uncertainty. Global growth this year is expected to be the weakest in 17 years, outside of outright recessions. Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said on 18 June that he believes that India does indeed stand out as a relatively "bright spot." India's economy has shown resilience post-COVID, achieving strong growth and improving fiscal health.

In 2024, India became the fifth-largest economy, with a GDP of \$3.6 trillion. It aspires to become the third-largest economy, with a GDP of \$5 trillion by 2027-2028. Recently, it was publicized that by 2025-26, India will overtake Japan's economy with \$4,187.017 billion to become the fourth largest. The three countries ahead of

India are the US (\$30.5 trillion), China (\$19.2 trillion), and Germany (\$4.74 trillion). It means the US and China are much ahead of India. In the 1980s, the size of the Indian economy was the same as China but now China's economy is around five times more than that of India. If India, with a population of around 146 crore, consumes or its richer section consumes more, automatically, the size of the economy will grow and carry a false notion of development. Growth is not an indicator of the well-being of society. It is just an indicator of economic activities.

India's per capita income of \$2,700 places it in the lower-middle-income category. Since 2007, India has been classified as a lower-middle-income country by the World Bank. According to World Bank, India faces "middle income trap," and it may take over 75 years to reach one-quarter of US income per capita. The middle-income trap refers to a situation where a country experiences rapid economic growth, reaching a middle-income level, but then gets stuck in a growth plateau, unable to advance

to a high-income status. The bitter truth is that in terms of per capita GDP, India's ranks abysmally at 143 out of 195 countries, against China's 70th rank and in terms of purchasing power parity, India ranks 127 out of 195 countries.

According to World Bank's latest estimates, India will need to grow by 7.8% on average over the next 22 years to achieve its high-income status ambition by 2047. Key to this would be to increase private and public investment to at least 40% of GDP from 33% currently. India's manufacturing sector, often touted as the engine of economic growth, is now facing one of its most critical challenges. The sector's contribution to GDP, which has stagnated at 16-17% for years, is expected to drop to 13-14% this fiscal. This decline comes despite government initiatives such as Make in India and reflects structural weaknesses that global headwinds have exacerbated. Supply chain disruptions, cost disadvantages, and a tepid export environment have significantly eroded the sector's competitiveness.

The gross domestic saving

(GDS) – key to investment and growth – as a percentage of GDP at current market prices has plummeted from record high of 37.8% in 2007-08 to 30.7% in 2023-24. Net financial savings that ensure capital at cheaper rates to government and corporates have also declined to 5.1% of GDP in 2023-24 from a peak of 12.10% in 2010-11. By contrast, net financial liabilities have increased from Rs 15.96 lakh crore or 5.9% of GDP in 2022-23 to Rs 18.79 lakh crore or 6.4% of GDP in 2023-24. The uptick in household debt, and the simultaneous decline in household net financial savings, has raised concerns about over-leverage and stress in the household balance sheet. India's household debt which was 8% of GDP in 2010-11 rose to 37.6% in March 2023, and further rose to 42.9% of GDP (at current prices) in June 2024, as per RBI's Financial Stability Report.

Hence, the government should try to address these problems before resorting to publicity blitzkrieg.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

INDIA WILL NEED TO GROW BY 7.8% ON AVERAGE OVER THE NEXT 22 YEARS TO ACHIEVE ITS HIGH-INCOME STATUS AMBITION BY 2047

Welcome trend

Sir, It is relieving to know the world has finally recognised the importance of the girl child. According to a report by The Economist, global preference for boy child is slowly fading. Globally, the number of excess male births has dwindled from 1.7 million in 2000 to around 2 lakh in 2025. In countries like South Korea and China sex ratios have become normal showing a preference for girl child. The world has recognised the seriousness of discriminating against girl children. Often girls surpass boys in education, care-giving, managing domestic affairs, earning, maintaining good family relationships and so on. While the global tilt towards girl child continues, the condition in India presents a complex picture. Although child sex ratio has improved in India, preference for boys still continues in several states. About 15% of parents in India show preference for boys. Inaccurate child sex ratios in Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh remain a concern. In rural and urban poor communities girls are discriminated against and are deprived of their rights. The government must take its cue from the global shift towards girl child and do what is necessary to maintain gender equality. Policies must be reframed for the uplift of girl children.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

Break the chain

Sir, Youngsters are grappling with the crippling physical and psychic effects of drugs. The UN observes the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (IDADAIT) on 26 June to focus on the grave danger posed by drug abuse and illegal drug trafficking. Socioeconomic status of a society stands to be stymied by unhealthy and unproductive members, and diseases are hazardous companions of drugs. About 6% of the global population used drugs at least once a week and 0.5% of these suffered from drug use disorders and drug dependence. UN's theme for 2025, "Breaking the Chains: Prevention, treatment and recovery of all" is emphatic as well as poignant. Past themes that focused on a strong bond between parents and children, better knowledge for better care, and sharing drug facts to save lives contained messages more than one.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
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Where is farm loan waiver: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, June 25: Congress Legislature Party leader in Maharashtra Vijay Wadettiwar claimed Wednesday estimate committee members were served meal in silver plates at a conclave and called it "extravagant spending" by the Mahayuti government when the state's finances were under strain.

The former state minister also targeted the BJP-led government over "deteriorating" law and order situation in Maharashtra, and what he called "internal contradictions" within the ruling coalition which consists of the BJP, NCP and Shiv Sena.

Speaking to reporters in Nagpur, Wadettiwar questioned the government's priorities, stating, "When the state is virtually on the brink of bankruptcy, what was the need to serve meals in silver plates to members of the Estimates Committees in Mumbai?"

He claimed each meal cost ₹5,000 and so much money was spent by the government at a time when farmers are being denied loan waivers, bonuses are not being paid, and large sections of tribal, social welfare, and Anganwadi schemes are allegedly facing budget cuts.

Mumbai hosted a two-day conference of the Estimates Committees of Parliament and states from June 23. The event, held at Vidhan Bhavan (legislative complex) in south Mumbai, saw participation of chairpersons and members of such panels of Parliament, states and Union Territory legislatures.

These financial committees, at the central and state and UT



A majority of farmers in Vidarbha have been denied fresh crop loans. Anganwadi workers aren't paid honorarium on time, and funds for schemes like the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana remain pending. Yet, the government chooses to serve meals to estimates committee members in silver plates

VIJAY WADETTIWAR | MAHARASHTRA CONGRESS LEADER

level, examine the expenditure estimates for each administrative department in respective budgets and also utilisation of funds.

"A majority of farmers in Vidarbha have been denied fresh crop loans. Anganwadi workers (who look after child care centres) aren't paid honorarium on time, and funds for schemes like the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana remain pending. Yet, the government chooses to serve meals to estimates committee members in silver plates," Wadettiwar said.

The opposition legislator maintained this act was nothing, but an insult to the poor.

His party colleague and Maharashtra Congress president Harshwardhan Sapkal also hit out at the Mahayuti government over the issue of "meal in silver plates".

"They (estimates committee

delegation members) feasted on ₹5,000 meal served in ₹550 worth of silver plate each. Was the fund spent linked to the money found in the Dhule government guest house when the state estimates committee was touring?" the MPCC chief asked in Mumbai.

Last month, a huge amount of cash was recovered from a room in the government guest house in Dhule district ahead of the visit of state estimates committee members.

"They have no money for farmers' loan waivers or even ₹2,100 for a poor sister, but they have no shortage of funds for lavish banquets," Sapkal remarked.

Citing an incident in Pune, where a BJP office-bearer allegedly molested a policewoman, CLP leader Wadettiwar questioned the Mahayuti government's moral authority to

uphold law and order.

"If even women police personnel are not safe, what does that say about law and order? The Chief Minister (who also holds the home portfolio) is from the BJP. Will women get justice when BJP men are accused of such acts?" he asked.

Raising concerns over the recently approved Maharashtra Shaktipeeth Expressway, Wadettiwar pointed to growing opposition among farmers, whose lands are likely to be acquired for the mega project.

"Some ministers in the Cabinet opposed the project, but that's not enough. If Hasan Mushrif and Prakash Abitkar (both ministers) truly object to it, they should quit the government. Mere token dissent while clinging to power is hypocrisy," the former minister emphasised.

The 802-km-long expressway will link Pavnar in Wardha district (in Vidarbha) with Paradevi in Sindhudurg district on the Maharashtra-Goa border.

The Congress MLA accused the Mahayuti government of indulging in "double standards", saying it has no money for the poor, but at the same time the ruling coalition is showing no restraint in spending on political elites.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut, whose party is an ally of the Congress, also hit out at the state government over the issue of corruption.

"The corruption taking place in Maharashtra cannot be compared to any scam in the world. It is a very high-level scam," Raut alleged.

Tension erupts at disputed Assam-Meghalaya border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, June 25: A mob Wednesday uprooted saplings and dismantled wooden structures erected to protect the plants, leading to tension in a village on disputed Assam-Meghalaya border, officials said.

The plantation drive in Lapangap village was conducted by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) of Assam.

Police personnel were deployed in the village.

A hill in Lapangap, on which the incident happened, is claimed by residents of both Meghalaya's West Jaintia Hills district and Karbi Anglong district of Assam.

Around 400 people of Lapangap and other villages, backed by members of several social organisations of Meghalaya, went to the plantation area, uprooted the saplings and burnt the wooden structure around 11am, claiming that Assam was trying to encroach into their state by carrying out the plantation.

West Jaintia Hills district Deputy Commissioner Abhinav Kumar Singh said adequate police forces have been deployed and the situation is now under control.

"Plantation activities were carried out by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council without prior notice to the (West Jaintia Hills) district administrations," Singh told PTI.

He said the information regarding the plantation first reached the district administration a week ago and "we have



restrained our people from going to the site as the peace meeting was supposed to be held today."

The scheduled peace meeting at Tahpat village did not take place as nobody turned up, the official said.

Adequate police forces were deployed at the site along with three border magistrates for effective coordination with the Assam government.

Singh said that the police personnel will be stationed at the site to check untoward incidents.

Police and civic officers from Karbi Anglong also visited the spot along with Meghalaya's border magistrates and tension was defused, he said.

The DC said that a peace meeting will be held Thursday to find an amicable solution.

He said, "Meetings have been held at the DC and SP level, and now we want the peace meeting to happen at the village level so that both headmen and their councils can sit together and come to a solution so that

such conflicts can be avoided in future and status quo be maintained."

In previous meetings, it was decided that the status quo should be maintained till both Assam and Meghalaya governments come to a solution.

According to the DC, Lapangap village is part of Meghalaya except for a hill on which the plantation took place which villagers from either side claimed as their own.

A leader of the influential Khasi Students' Union (KSU) said it extended full support to Lapangap's residents alleging that Karbi Anglong people encroached into the area.

"So, we dismantled all structures and uprooted the saplings. Assam Police fired tear gas shells but we will continue to defend our land," he said.

KSU general secretary Neelke Mukhim alleged that the Karbi people residing near Lapangap village had made the plantation defying an agreement made between the two sides.

Four interstate arms dealers held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, June 25: Manipur Police arrested four members of an inter-state gang of arms dealers and seized arms and ammunition from their possession, an officer said Wednesday.

Police cracked down on an inter-state organised gang of arms smugglers and middlemen who were smuggling unauthorised arms across different states, operating clandestinely in greater Imphal area and arrested four persons including a member of UNLF (Pambei) Tuesday, the officer said.

Two 9 mm Smith and Wesson pistols, one 9 mm Sig Sauer pistol, one Glock 19 pistol with 2 magazines, one 7.65 mm JD Taurus pistol with magazine, one Falcon Cal 7.62 mm along with magazine, one M-20 Falcon pistol, one Keltec pistol .32 mm with 2 magazines, one Beretta pistol, one Glock pistol .32 mm, 159 number of .32 mm live ammunition and four wireless sets were seized from their possession, he said.

Meanwhile, in a separate operation, the police Tuesday arrested three active cadres of UNLF (Pambei) from Babupara in Imphal West district. They were involved in extortion and threatening government employees to gain contract work.

Two 9 mm pistols along with magazines, one .32 mm pistol along with magazine and ammunition were seized from their possession.

Security forces also arrested one active cadre of UNLF (Ningolmacha) involved in extortion in Thoubal district.

Mizoram introduces e-office system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, June 25: The Mizoram government has joined other states in launching e-office system to enhance digital governance and streamline official functioning, a minister said Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference here, state Information and Communication Technology (ICT) minister Dr Vanlalhlana said that e-offices have been rolled out at the state secretariat April 18.

Initially, it was introduced as a pilot in four departments, including the school education department and PWD in the secretariat, it has now been adopted in all the 41 departments in the secretariat and the Chief Minister's Office, he said.

After the secretariat, such offices will be introduced in directorates and district offices, he said. According to Vanlalhlana,

initiatives have been taken since January 2024 to introduce e-office system in the state.

He said the Centre's department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances sanctioned ₹1.99 crore under the State Collaborative Initiative scheme for opening e-offices.

At least 6,492 files have been created so far using the system, he said. He said that it has enhanced governance as office files can now move at a faster pace and there are no more reports of missing files.

The minister said that the system has been effectively used by the chief minister, ministers, chief secretary, secretaries and senior officials as they can work outside offices through the virtual private network.

He said that the digital system will reduce the government's expenses as it will do away with paper works.

Hindi should be taught from Class V: Ajit Pawar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, June 25: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has opposed the move to introduce Hindi as a third language from Class I in the schools of the state, and said it should instead be taught from Class V.

Speaking to reporters in Mumbai Tuesday, Pawar also said students should learn Marathi from Class I so that they are able to read and write it well.

The state government last week issued an amended order, stating Hindi will generally be taught as the third language

to students in Marathi and English medium schools from Classes I to V, which triggered a controversy.

The government maintained that Hindi would not be compulsory, but mandated the consent of at least 20 students per grade in a school for studying any Indian language other than Hindi.

Speaking on the issue, Pawar said, "The chief minister convened a meeting on the issue yesterday (Monday). I believe Hindi should not be introduced from Class I to IV. It should begin from Class V. Students should learn Marathi from Class V and be able to read and

write it fluently."

He added that while no one is against the teaching of any particular language, it is inappropriate to burden young students with an additional language at an early stage.

Following the meeting in Mumbai, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis had said a final decision on the three-language formula would be taken only after consultations with all stakeholders, including literateurs, language experts and political leaders.

Meanwhile, actor Sayaji Shinde also voiced his opposition to teaching Hindi from Class V.

PM Modi thanks Sangma for gifting him Ryndia silk fabric

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, June 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday thanked Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma for presenting him with Ryndia silk fabric woven by women of the northeastern state.

In a letter to Sangma, Modi said people across the world are increasingly seeking products that are ethically produced and have less impact on the environment.

The CM had gifted a piece of 'Ryndia Silk' fabric woven by women weavers of Ri-Bhoi district. The fabric, which was granted a GI tag last year, is a symbol of Meghalaya's cultural heritage and pride.

"Today, people around the world are increasingly seeking products that not only minimise the impact on the environment, but are also ethically produced, reflecting a growing global commitment to sustainability and social responsibility," Modi said in the letter to Sangma. He said, "Your thoughtfulness is touching and is deeply appreciated. It is in this context that products such as 'Ryndia Silk' stand out."

According to the Prime Minister, the grant of the GI Tag to it is yet another step that reiterates the country's resolve to promote such products on the global stage.

All wings of democracy work under Constitution: CJI Gavai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amravati (Maharashtra), June 25: Chief Justice of India B R Gavai Wednesday said the Constitution of India is supreme, and all three wings of our democracy work under the Constitution.

While some people say that Parliament is supreme, in his opinion the Constitution is paramount, he said.

Justice Gavai, who took oath as the 52nd CJI last month, was speaking at his felicitation in Amravati city of eastern Maharashtra, his hometown.

There is always a discussion as to which wing of democracy -- the executive, legislature or the judiciary -- is supreme, he said.

"While many say and believe that Parliament is supreme, according to me, it is the Constitution of India that is supreme. All three wings of the democracy work under the Constitution," he said.

Referring to a judgment passed by the Apex court on the foundation of the 'Basic Structure' doctrine, CJI Gavai said Parliament has the power to amend, but it can not alter the basic structure of the Constitution.

A judge does not become independent just by passing orders against the government,

he further said.

"A judge should always remember that we have a duty, and we are custodians of the rights of citizens and constitutional values and principles. We don't just have power, but a duty is cast upon us," he said.

A judge should not be guided by what people will say or feel about their judgment, the CJI further said.

"We have to think independently. What people will say cannot become a part of our decision-making process," he said.

The CJI asserted that he always let his judgments and work speak, and always stood by the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.

During his speech, the chief justice cited a few of his judgments.

Referring to his judgment against "bulldozer justice", he said the right to shelter is supreme.

CJI Gavai also reminisced about his childhood days on this occasion. While he wanted to be an architect, his father wished that he become a lawyer, he said.

"My father had wanted to become a lawyer but was unable to become one, as at the time he was arrested for being part of the freedom movement," Gavai said.

Gautala, Pench sanctuaries to remain shut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, June 25: The Gautala Autramghat wildlife sanctuary in Maharashtra will remain closed for tourists for two-and-a-half months from July 1 to facilitate breeding of animals and birds, an official said Wednesday.

A few more protected forests, including the Pench Tiger Reserve, have also imposed some restrictions on visitors during the rainy season.

In an order issued Tuesday, the forest department said the Gautala Autramghat sanctuary, spread over 64,000 acres



in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Jalgaon districts, will be out of bounds for visitors till September 15.

"This is the breeding season for most animals and birds living in the area. Moreover, tourists might get stuck inside the

sanctuary during the rains. So we have taken this decision," said Deputy Conservator of Forest Mohan Naikwadi.

Gautala, located in Satmala and Ajanta hill ranges, is home to leopards, wild boars, a tiger, over 240 varieties of birds and many other animals, an official said.

Meanwhile, the authorities said that the jungle safari in the core regions of Pench Tiger Reserve in Nagpur district, Bor Tiger Reserve in Wardha district and Umred-Paoni-Karhandala Wildlife Sanctuary, straddling Bhandara and Nagpur district, will be inaccessible to tourists from July 1 until "further orders".



This day (June 25) serves as a reminder to future generations that democracy must never be taken for granted. It requires constant vigilance, active participation, and respect for constitutional values

PREM SINGH TAMANG | CHIEF MINISTER, SIKKIM

AMARNATH YATRA: NDRF CONDUCTS MOCK DRILL

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) conducted a mock drill to prepare for any emergencies that may arise during the annual Amarnath Yatra, which begins July 3 in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said Wednesday



of the day note

By imposing the Emergency, Indira Gandhi had trampled upon Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution. Her grandson Rahul Gandhi likes to keep the same Constitution in his pocket. This shows the party's disregard for the Constitution

ANURAG THAKUR | SENIOR BJP LEADER

The government spent crores on propaganda. The state emblem is missing in the advertisements issued by the state government, and a Sengol is displayed instead. This is not just symbolic, but is part of a larger conspiracy to alter the Constitution

HARSHWARDHAN SAKPAL | CONGRESS PRESIDENT, MAHARASHTRA

I believe the new generation must know about this dark chapter when democracy was throttled. If we succeed in conveying this message to them and the people, I believe no dictator will ever rise in this country again, and democracy will be safe

MANOJ SINHA | LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

SHORT TAKES

Akali leader Bikram Majithia arrested

Chandigarh: The Punjab Vigilance Bureau Wednesday arrested senior Akali leader and former minister Bikram Singh Majithia after conducting a raid at his residence in Amritsar in a disproportionate assets case registered against him, sources said. The bureau seized 29 mobile phones, four laptops, two iPads, eight diaries and some documents from Majithia's residence, they said. Majithia, who is the brother-in-law of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, is already facing probe in a 2021 drugs case. After conducting the raid, the vigilance team from Mohali faced protests by Majithia and his wife and Akali MLA Ganieve Kaur Majithia, who accused the officers of barging into the house in Green Avenue Wednesday morning.

EC to review voters lists in six states

New Delhi: The Election Commission will carry out an intensive review of electoral rolls this year in six states beginning with Bihar to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth. Bihar is going to polls this year while assembly polls in five other states -- Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal -- are scheduled in 2026. The move, which would be later expanded to other states, assumes significance in the wake of a crackdown in various states on illegal foreign migrants, including from Bangladesh and Myanmar. Eventually, the poll authority will begin special intensive revision in the entire country "for the discharge of its constitutional mandate to protect the integrity of the electoral rolls".

Kaliganj blast: Forensic team collects evidence

Kolkata: Forensic experts Wednesday collected samples from Kaliganj in West Bengal's Nadia district, where a minor girl was killed in a bomb explosion during a celebratory procession linked to bypoll results there June 23, police said. Sabina Yasmin, the mother of the 13-year-old victim, refused to accept the money offered by a ruling Trinamool Congress MLA and set a 24-hour deadline for the police to nab those culprits who are yet to be arrested.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF EMERGENCY

Cong placed 'democracy under arrest': PM Modi

The Modi government observes June 25 as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' so that the new generation is made aware of the pain and torture that the countrymen faced during the Emergency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that an undeclared emergency prevailed in the country, as he accused the BJP of staging a 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' 'drama' to hide its governance failure

Coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Emergency, a book which highlights Modi's fight for "the ideals of democracy" was released by Home Minister Amit Shah. 'The Emergency Diaries - Years that Forged a Leader' is published by BlueKraft.

In a series of posts on X, Modi said the Emergency was one of the darkest chapters in India's democratic history.

The values enshrined in the Constitution were set aside, fundamental rights suspended, press freedom extinguished and a large number of political leaders, social workers, students and ordinary citizens jailed, he noted.

"It was as if the Congress Government in power at that time placed democracy under arrest."

The Modi government observes June 25 as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' so that the new generation is made aware of the pain and torture that the countrymen faced during the Emergency, he said.

"This day tells us that when power becomes dictatorial, the people have the power to overthrow it," he wrote on X in Hindi.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that an undeclared emergency prevailed in the country, as he accused the BJP of staging a 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' "drama" to hide its governance failure.

Hitting back at Prime Minister Modi over his jibes at Congress, Kharge said a government which has no tolerance and does not allow fraternity and liberty to prosper has no right to lecture others.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress' Indira Bhawan, Kharge slammed the BJP-RSS and said those who "played no role in the independence of the country, in framing the Constitution, and rejected Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution" are raking up the Emergency, 50 years after it was imposed. The same people are now talking of saving the Constitution, he added.

Union Cabinet resolves to honour sacrifices of victims of Emergency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 25: The Union Cabinet Wednesday resolved to commemorate and honour the sacrifices of countless individuals who resisted the Emergency and observed a brief silence as a mark of tribute to them.

At its meeting under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Union Cabinet observed a two-minute silence as a tribute to those whose constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights were taken away and who were then subjected to unimaginable horrors.

"The Union Cabinet paid tributes to their exemplary courage and valiant resistance to the Emergency's excesses," Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said at the Cabinet briefing.

The resolution further said the year 2025 marks 50 years of the 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' - an unforgettable chapter in the history of India where the Constitution was subverted, the Republic and democratic spirit of India were attacked, federalism was undermined, and fundamental rights, human liberty and dignity were suspended.

"The Union Cabinet reaffirmed that the people of India continue to repose unflinching faith in the Indian Constitution and the resilience of the country's democratic ethos," Vaishnaw said.

"It is as important for the young as it is for the old to draw inspiration from those who resisted dictatorial tendencies and stood firm to defend our Constitution and its democratic fabric," the minister said while reading out the resolution.

2 dead, 20 feared swept away in HP cloudburst



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla/Dharamshala, June 25: Two persons died while about 20 were feared swept away as cloudburst, flash floods and heavy rain wreaked havoc in Himachal Pradesh Wednesday.

Two bodies were recovered from the Manuni Khad in Kangra district while around 15-20 workers stationed at a labour colony near the Indira Priyadarshini Hydroelectric project site were feared swept away following a surge in water level in the Khaniyara Manuni Khad.

According to officials, the project work had been suspended due to rain, and the workers were resting in the temporary shelters near the site when floodwaters from Manuni Khad and nearby drains diverted towards the labour colony, sweeping the workers away.

Teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), local administration, gram panchayat, and the revenue department have reached the spot to carry out search and rescue operations.

Some local workers associated with the project have been reported safe, the officials said.

In a post on social media, Dharamshala's BJP MLA Sudhir Sharma said that about 20 workers were swept away in the incident.

More details are awaited

as rescue operations continue amid challenging weather conditions

Meanwhile, three people went missing as cloudbursts led to flash floods in several parts of Kullu district, damaging many houses, a school building, shops, connecting roads and small bridges, officials said.

Three cloudburst incidents were reported from Jeeva Nallah and Rehla Bihal in Sainj and Shilagarh in Gadsa area of Kullu district.

Three people in Rehla Bihal trying to take away their valuables from their homes were washed away in the deluge and are missing, the officials said.

Flash floods were also reported from Manali and Banjar in the district, and search operations were underway, Kullu ADC Ashwani Kumar said.

The Manali-Chandigarh National Highway was partially damaged near Manali as the Beas River in spate cut into a part of the highway. However, vehicular traffic is still on.

Videos of heavy floods at several places in Kullu show the extent of the damage. In one, a vehicle can be seen floating in muddy waters.

In Banjar subdivision, a bridge was washed away due to floods in the Hornagad area while water entered the premises of a government school, besides damaging an agriculture land and a cowshed.

Nitish Katara murder: SC grants 3-month furlough to Sukhdev Yadav

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday granted three months furlough to Sukhdev Yadav alias Pehalwan in the 2002 Nitish Katara murder case. A bench of Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and K Vinod Chandran noted that Yadav has undergone 20 years of uninterrupted incarceration without remission. The top court directed that Yadav be produced before the trial court within seven days and appropriate conditions be imposed on him by the trial court before grant of furlough. Furlough is a temporary release from prison, not a suspension or remission of the entire sentence, and is typically granted to long-term inmates who have served a portion of their sentence. Yadav's plea challenged a November 2024 order of the Delhi High Court, which dismissed his petition for releasing him on furlough for three weeks. The Supreme Court awarded a 25-year jail term without the benefit of remission to Vikas Yadav October 3, 2016 and his cousin Vishal Yadav for their role in the sensational kidnapping and killing of Katara. Co-convict Sukhdev Yadav was given a 20-year jail term in the case.

SC slams jail authorities for not releasing man on bail

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday slammed the Uttar Pradesh jail authorities for delaying the release of a man whom it granted bail April 29 in a case under UP's anti-conversion law, and directed the state to pay him ₹5 lakh as compensation. A bench of Justices KV Viswanathan and N Kotiswar Singh observed that liberty was a "very valuable and precious" right guaranteed under the Constitution and the man had lost his liberty for at least 28 days due to a "non-issue". The accused was granted bail by the apex court April 29 and subsequently May 27, a trial court in Ghaziabad issued the release order. The top court was informed Wednesday that the man was released from district jail Ghaziabad June 24. The bench took strong exception over the delay in the man's release on bail for such a long time on the ground that a sub-section of a provision of Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021 was not mentioned in the bail order. "God knows how many people are languishing in your jails in spite of court orders," the bench told the counsel appearing for Uttar Pradesh.

SC flags concern over police summoning lawyers

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday said allowing police or probe agencies to directly summon lawyers for advising clients would seriously undermine the autonomy of legal profession and was a "direct threat" to the independence of justice administration. A bench of Justices KV Viswanathan and N Kotiswar Singh observed the legal profession was an integral component of the process of administration of justice. "Permitting the investigating agencies/police to directly summon defense counsel or advocates who advise parties in a given case would seriously undermine the autonomy of legal profession and would even constitute a direct threat to the independence of the administration of justice," the apex court said.

Patanjali signs MoU with 3 prestigious Indian universities



Patanjali University and the Patanjali Research Institute signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with three of the country's prestigious universities Wednesday to foster mutual cooperation in the fields of education, medicine, yoga, Ayurveda, skill development, Indian knowledge traditions, and other areas. The event was graced by the presence of Prof Indra Prasad Tripathi, Vice Chancellor, Raja Shankar Shah University, Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh; Dr. Sanjay Tiwari, Vice Chancellor, HemchandYadav University, Durg, Chhattisgarh; and Prof. Bharat Mishra, Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi ChitrankootGramodaya University, Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh. All the distinguished academicians praised the nation-building efforts being undertaken at Patanjali. On this occasion, Dr.AcharyaBalkrishna, Vice Chancellor of Patanjali University, elaborated on Patanjali's contributions in areas such as historical documentation, botany, diagnostic texts, and the Global Herbal Codex, among other traditional sciences. He stated that the ongoing journeys of the Rishi Revolution, Yoga Revolution, and Education Revolution will continue to benefit millions across the nation, and expressed his firm belief in this vision.

Flying anxiety peaks in India after fatal AI crash

REUTERS

Bangalore, June 25: Retired Air Force officer Dinesh K has seen a surge in demand for his \$500 therapy course to help people overcome their fear of flying since Air India flight 171 crashed moments after take-off from Ahmedabad two weeks ago.

Dinesh uses a combination of flight simulation and counselling at his Cockpit Vista centre for "fear of flying solutions" in Bangalore, the only one in India. The centre has received more than 100 enquiries since the disaster, compared to a previous average of about ten a month.

"Fear of flying is typically to do with things happening on an aeroplane - the sounds, motion, vibrations exposure therapy is the only solution," Dinesh, 55, told Reuters during a tour of the facility where he demonstrated how cockpit con-

trols relate to movements that often worry passengers.

The centre has a simulator for a Boeing and Cessna plane to help people experience how landings and takeoffs appear from the cockpit and understand that not every vibration or sound during a flight signals danger.

WhatsApp messages Dinesh received, and shared with Reuters, showed individuals complaining about "losing confidence" after the crash while others said it was "too hard on the brain".

A chilling 59-second CCTV clip showing the crash of the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, which killed 260 people, has been widely shared on social media and TV channels since the June 12 accident, which aviation and mental health experts said had led to an unusually high number of counselling requests.

Some travellers are becoming

'BLOODY TERRIFIED'



more choosy in selecting their airline and aircraft - Boeing or Airbus - while others are so anxious they are taking more drastic steps by rescheduling or cancelling their air travel plans altogether.

"I am filtering on the basis

of not having to fly a Boeing. I'm bloody terrified currently, and I don't want to get back on a flight," said London-based Indian marketing consultant Nidhi Bhatia, 25, who flew to Mumbai in an Air India Boeing 777 plane a day before the

- Surge in enquiries to India's only centre for treating fear of flying
Crash visuals, non-stop TV coverage spiking anxiety, experts say
Travel agents say ticket bookings have dropped since crash
Some anxious fliers filtering out Boeing options

Ahmedabad crash. 'DEBILITATING ANXIETY' Flying is typically seen as a safe mode of transport, and crashes during takeoff are especially rare. The International Civil Aviation Organization said there were 1.87 accidents per million departures in 2023, its most recent annual air safety report. Of the nine hull loss accidents without fatalities recorded in 2024, only two occurred

on take off, according to Airbus' website.

The airport CCTV recording from Ahmedabad shows the Air India plane rose to a height of 650 feet (198.12 m) after it took off, but suddenly lost altitude, crashing in a fireball into a nearby building -- all within 60 seconds.

The disturbing footage was a key cause of the panic among Indian travellers, five mental health experts said.

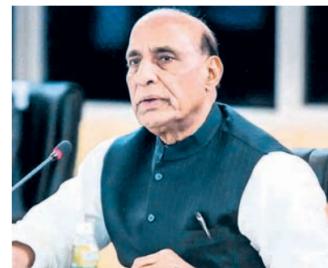
People were seeking help because they had developed insomnia or become obsessed with flight updates, they said.

Others were scared of letting their loved ones travel on planes, complaining of "debilitating anxiety" for their relatives in transit "to an extent where they have been unable to focus on their daily chores" because they are constantly checking messages to see if they have landed, said psychologist Pankti Gohel.



“The book ‘The Emergency Diaries: Years That Forged a Leader’ chronicles PM Modi’s experiences as a young activist during the Emergency, a period in which he was actively involved in the movement for 19 months
”
 AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

RAJNATH BEGINS CHINA VISIT
 Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Wednesday arrived in the Chinese port city of Qingdao to attend a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). It is the first visit to China by a senior Indian minister after the ties came under severe strain following the military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh that began in May 2020



of the day **QUOTE**

For some people, Modi is first: Kharge

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge hit out at party MP Shashi Tharoor for his recent remarks praising PM Narendra Modi, saying that ‘for some people, Modi comes first’



Soon after Kharge’s remarks at a press conference here, Tharoor put out a cryptic post on X in which there was an image of a bird with the caption – ‘Don’t ask permission to fly. The wings are yours. And the sky belongs to no one’

New Delhi, June 25: In a jibe at Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge Wednesday said his party believes in “country first” mantra but for some it is “Modi first and country later”.

Soon after Kharge’s remarks at a press conference here, Tharoor put out a cryptic post on X in which there was an image of a bird with the caption – “Don’t ask permission to fly. The wings are yours. And the sky belongs to no one.”

Asked about Tharoor’s article on Operation Sindoor outreach in which he praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kharge said, “I can’t read English well. His (Tharoor’s) (English) language is

very good, that’s why we have made him a Congress Working Committee member.”

“But I want to say that the people of the Opposition together said they are with the Army that is fighting (during Operation Sindoor)... We (the Congress) said the country is paramount and we will work together (with the government). We said ‘country first,

try. We will keep fighting for the country, there is no need to pay attention to anyone’s words.”

Pressed further on the Thiruvananthapuram MP’s comments, Kharge said Tharoor is speaking according to his will but “we do not want to keep harping on it as we are more concerned about how to save the country”.

Tharoor, in an article published in The Hindu Monday, said Modi’s energy, dynamism and willingness to engage remained a “prime asset” for India on the global stage but deserved greater backing.

His remarks were seen as likely to irk his Congress party and widen cracks in his ties with its leadership.

In the article, Tharoor said the diplomatic outreach following Operation Sindoor was a moment of national resolve and effective communication.

The Prime Minister’s Office had shared Tharoor’s article on X.

Speaking at an event in Moscow, Tharoor Tuesday said his article on Operation Sindoor’s global outreach was not a sign of his “leaping to join” Prime Minister Modi’s party but a statement of national unity, interest and standing up for India.

296 Indians, 4 Nepalese evacuated from Iran

With this, the number of Indian nationals evacuated from Iran so far under Operation Sindhu stands at 3,154



India Tuesday had evacuated over 1,100 citizens from Iran and Israel.

New Delhi, June 25: India Wednesday evacuated 296 Indian citizens and four Nepalese nationals from Iran amid the ongoing conflict with Israel, officials said.

With this, the number of Indian nationals evacuated from Iran so far under Operation Sindhu stands at 3,154, they said.

“#OperationSindhu update 296 Indian and 4 Nepalese nationals were evacuated from Iran on a special flight that arrived in New Delhi from Mashhad at 16:30 hrs 25th June. 3154 Indian nationals have now been brought home from Iran as part of #OperationSindhu,” External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on X.

The tensions escalated significantly following the US bombing of three major Iranian nuclear sites Sunday morning.

India has evacuated its nationals on chartered flights operated from the Iranian city of Mashhad, the Armenian capital of Yerevan and the Turkmenistan capital of Ashgabat since June 18. Iran lifted airspace restrictions June 20 to facilitate three chartered flights from Mashhad.

The first flight had landed in New Delhi late Friday last week with 290 Indians, and the second one landed in the national capital Saturday afternoon with 310 Indians.

The country is currently going through an undeclared Emergency. If Indira Gandhi abused the Constitution, then today the Sangh Parivar government is trying to do away with it
 PINARAYI VIJAYAN | CHIEF MINISTER, KERALA

Congress continues to have the same dictatorial mindset that was behind the imposition of the Emergency 50 years back, stating that it believes only one family has a right to govern the country
 JP NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

Book recalls Modi posing as ‘swamiji’ to enter jail

BlueKraft has published ‘The Emergency Diaries - Years that Forged a Leader’ to chronicle Modi’s role in the underground campaign during that period, after speaking to a number of people associated with him at that time

New Delhi, June 25: Evading detection as a member of the banned RSS during the Emergency, Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled in different disguises but it did not stop him from visiting a jail, of all the places with high risk for him, as a “swami-ji” to speak to the incarcerated activists for nearly an hour, according to a book.

Then a young RSS pracharak, Modi travelled in different disguises, held meetings with people, including fellow workers from the Hindutva outfit, organised help for families of the imprisoned and ensured regular publication and distribution of anti-Emergency literature during the 21-month-long authoritarian regime of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

BlueKraft has published

“The Emergency Diaries - Years that Forged a Leader” to chronicle Modi’s role in the underground campaign during that period, after speaking to a number of people associated with him at that time.

Modi joined the RSS at a young age and made a mark with his organisational ability. He was shifted to the BJP where he worked at the state and national level before returning to Gujarat as the chief minister in 2001.

He has been the prime minister since leading the BJP to its maiden majority in Lok Sabha in 2014.

Excerpts from the book quote a RSS volunteer, Hasmukh Patel from Nadiad, Gujarat, about Modi’s keen mind for innovative outreaches even then, noting that he suggested placing anti-Emergency literature in barber shops where people from different walks of



life gathered, and with religious leaders as followers came to listen to them.

The book says, “He not only ensured the regular publication of anti-Emergency literature but also took on the perilous responsibility of distributing it throughout Gujarat. In those dark times, literature and publications played a vital role in keeping the democratic flame burning in the hearts of the citizens.”

Modi frequently adopted the disguise of a Sikh to continue his activities, it says.

“His Sardarji disguise was so convincing that even his close acquaintances failed to recognise him,” it adds.

Vishnu Pandya, a journalist from Junagadh, notes that Modi as a member of the national-level ‘Sangharsh Samiti’ contributed to the broader nationwide movement against the “draco-

nian rule”, and decided to meet the arrested activists, including him, in a Bhavnagar jail.

About 200 of them were imprisoned and a member of Sarvodaya, an organisation associated with Jayaprakash Narayan, would often bring them books.

Pandya says, “It was a suitable opportunity for Modi to come to jail and meet us. In September 1976, after extensive preparations, Modi arrived in Bhavnagar. He entered the jail premises in the guise of a swami-ji and successfully obtained permission to meet his ‘followers’. He joined us at the central office of the jail and stayed with us for about an hour.”

He adds, “We talked about the jail administration and the situation of the families of the imprisoned, which was a significant concern as the earning members were in jail and the entire family was outside.

Vice Prez Dhankhar faints at Kumaon Univ

Nainital: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar fainted Wednesday while attending the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Kumaon University here. As the Vice President stepped down from the dais after delivering his speech, he approached his former parliamentary colleague, Mahendra Singh Pal, who was seated in the audience. Pal, an advocate in the High Court of Uttarakhand, served as a Lok Sabha MP in 1989 when Dhankhar was also an MP from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan. Both men appeared to become emotional upon seeing each other. After talking to each other for a while, Dhankhar embraced Pal and appeared to pass out on his shoulders. Noticing something was wrong, the medical team accompanying the Vice President quickly responded and brought him back to consciousness. Dhankhar soon recovered and proceeded to the Raj Bhawan, where he would spend the night. The Vice President began his three-day visit to Nainital Wednesday.

HISTORIC SPACE VOYAGE



In this screenshot via @SpaceX on X on June 25, 2025, Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others aboard the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft bound for the International Space Station



SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the Crew Dragon capsule carrying Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others lifts off from the launch pad at the Kennedy Space Centre, in Florida, USA



Family members of Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla react as they watch the live broadcast of Axiom 4 mission, in Lucknow, Wednesday



SpaceX Falcon 9 crew member Shubhanshu Shukla waves before departing to pad 39A for a launch to the International Space Station



People celebrate as they watch the live broadcast of Axiom 4 space mission, in Lucknow, Wednesday

international



Let us listen to this voice that comes from on High. Heal the lacerations caused by the bloody actions of recent days, reject all logic of bullying and revenge, and resolutely take the path of dialogue, diplomacy and peace

POPE LEO XIV | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

HOUSE SHELVES EFFORT TO IMPEACH TRUMP

The US House voted overwhelmingly to set aside an effort to impeach President Donald Trump on a sole charge of abuse of power after he launched military strikes on Iran without first seeking authorisation from Congress



Pak Army officer, who captured Abhinandan in 2019, killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, June 25: An officer of the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group, who had claimed to have captured Indian Air Force pilot Abhinandan Varthaman after his jet was shot down in a dogfight in 2019, was killed in a clash with the Taliban militants, according to the army.

Major Syed Moiz Abbas Shah, 37, was killed Tuesday in a clash with the Taliban militants in the Sararogha area of South Waziristan near the Afghan border, according to a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the army.

Lance Naik Jibran Ullah, 27, was also killed in the same battle, it said. The army troops killed 11 terrorists belonging to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and wounded seven others in the same operation, the statement said.

After his death, it turned out that he was the same officer who had captured Abhinandan and saved him from mob violence, local media reported. An old clip of his interview with Geo TV on social media shows Moiz, who was captain then, giving details of capturing Abhinandan.

An old clip of his interview with Geo TV on social media shows Moiz, who was captain then, giving details of capturing Abhinandan.

An old clip of his interview with Geo TV on social media shows Moiz, who was captain then, giving details of capturing Abhinandan.

NATO harks back to Cold War era

The intergovernmental transnational military alliance of 32 member states commit to spending hike sought by Trump, and to mutual defence



The Hague, June 25: NATO leaders Wednesday backed the big increase in defence spending that US President Donald Trump had demanded, and restated their commitment to defend each other from attack after a brief summit in the Netherlands.

While Trump got what he wanted at the annual meeting, tailor-made for him, his NATO allies will be relieved that he committed to the fundamental principle of collective defence after less clear-cut language Tuesday. Trump told a press conference that "we had a great victory here", adding that he hoped that the additional funds would be spent on military hardware made in the U.S.

deal from the U.S. than other European Union countries.

In a five-point statement, NATO endorsed the higher defence spending goal - a response not only to Trump but also to Europeans' fears that Russia poses a growing threat to their security following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The 32 allies' brief communiqué added: "We reaffirm our ironclad commitment to collective defence as enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty - that an attack on one is an attack on all."

Asked to clarify his own stance on Article 5 after recent ambiguous comments, Trump said: "I stand with it. That's why I'm here. If I didn't stand with it, I wouldn't be here."

MACRON BRINGS UP TRADE TENSIONS

Trump had long demanded in no uncertain terms that other countries step up their spending to reduce NATO's heavy

UK to buy 12 F-35A jets capable of N-warheads

London: Prime Minister Keir Starmer Wednesday announced that the UK will purchase 12 new F-35A fighter jets capable of carrying nuclear warheads after a government defence review warned that Britain must "actively prepare" for a direct attack on the country in a "wartime scenario". Starmer informed the ongoing North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit in The Hague of the UK's plans to acquire the dual-capable aircraft, which can carry both nuclear and conventional weapons. The UK said it will deploy the jets as part of NATO's nuclear "Dual Capable Aircraft" mission in support of the alliance's nuclear deterrence posture.

reliance on the US.

Despite an appearance of general agreement, French President Emmanuel Macron raised the issue of the steep import tariffs threatened by Trump, and the damage they may do to transatlantic trade, as a barrier to increased defence spending. "We can't say we are going

to spend more and then, at the heart of NATO, launch a trade war," Macron said, calling it "an aberration". He said he had raised it several times with Trump.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who hosted the summit in his home city of The Hague, said NATO would

- NATO countries to raise defence spending to 5% of GDP
Alliance members restate commitment to mutual defence
Short summit designed to placate US President
Macron links spending to transatlantic trade tensions

emerge as a 'stronger, fairer and more lethal' alliance.

NEW NATO SPENDING TARGETS ARE DAUNTING

The new spending target - to be achieved over the next 10 years - is a jump worth hundreds of billions of dollars a year from the current goal of 2% of GDP, although it will be measured differently.

Countries pledged to spend 3.5% of GDP on core defence - such as troops and weapons - and 1.5% on broader defence-related measures such as cyber security, protecting pipelines and adapting roads and bridges to handle heavy military vehicles.

The additional spending will be a tall order for European nations, many of which have strained finances.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had to settle for attending the pre-summit dinner Tuesday evening rather than the main meeting on Wednesday, although he met Trump separately after the conference ended.

The Kremlin has accused NATO of being on a path of rampant militarisation and portraying Russia as a "fiend of hell" in order to justify its big increase in defence spending.

TRUMP THREATENS TO PUNISH SPAIN

However, he threatened to punish Spain after Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez declared it could meet its commitments to NATO while spending much less than the new target of 5% of GDP.

"I think it's terrible. You know, they (Spain) are doing very well ... And that economy could be blown right out of the water when something bad happens," Trump said, adding that Spain would get a tougher trade

Indian origin Democrat Mamdani wins New York mayoral primary

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, June 25: In a stunning victory, Indian-American lawmaker Zohran Kwame Mamdani defeated former governor Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic primary race for New York City mayor.

Mamdani, son of renowned Indian filmmaker Mira Nair and Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan author of Indian ancestry, was declared victorious in the Democratic mayoral primary Tuesday night.

"In the words of Nelson Mandela: it always seems impossible until it's done. My friends, it is done. And you are the ones who did it. I am honoured to be your Democratic nominee for the Mayor of New York City," Mamdani said in a post on X.

Mamdani was born in Kampla, Uganda, October 18, 1991, and raised in New York City. He moved to New York with his parents when he was seven. His mother Mira Nair has won applause for films like 'Monsoon Wedding' and 'Salaam Bombay!'

Mamdani, a state assembly-



man from Queens and a democratic socialist running for Mayor, is married to Brooklyn-based Syrian-born artist Rama Duwaji.

Mamdani has vowed that as Mayor, he will immediately freeze the rent for all stabilised tenants, and use every available resource to build the housing New Yorkers need and bring down the rent.

The New York City mayoral election is scheduled for November 4, 2025.

Iran suspends cooperation with IAEA

REUTERS

Dubai, June 25: Iran's parliament approved a bill Wednesday to suspend cooperation with the U.N. nuclear watchdog, state-affiliated news outlet Nournews reported.

The move follows an air war with Israel in which Iran's longtime enemy said it wanted to prevent Tehran developing a nuclear weapon.

The bill, which must be approved by Iran's unelected Guardian Council to become law, stipulates that any future inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would need approval by the Supreme National Security Council.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was quoted by state media as also saying Iran would accelerate its civilian nuclear programme.

Tehran denies seeking nuclear weapons and says an IAEA resolution this month declaring Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations paved the way for Israel's attacks.

Qalibaf was quoted as saying the IAEA had refused even to



appear to condemn the attack on Iran's nuclear facilities and "has put its international credibility up for sale."

He said that "for this reason, the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran will suspend its cooperation with the Agency until the security of the nuclear facilities is guaranteed, and move at a faster pace with the country's peaceful nuclear programme."

Parliament's national security committee approved the bill's general outline this week and the committee's spokesper-

son said the bill would suspend the installation of surveillance cameras, inspections and filing of reports to the IAEA.

The full extent of the damage done to nuclear sites during the Israeli attacks and US bombing of underground Iranian nuclear facilities is not yet clear.

"I think that our view on our nuclear programme and the non-proliferation regime will witness changes, but it is not possible to say in what direction," Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told Qatar's Al-Araby Al-Jadeed this week.

IAEA chief says it's possible Iran's highly enriched uranium 'is there'

There is a chance that much of Iran's highly enriched uranium survived Israeli and U.S. attacks because it may have been moved by Tehran soon after the first strikes, UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi said Wednesday. International Atomic Energy Agency chief Grossi said earlier this week that Iran had informed the IAEA June 13 - the first day of Israeli strikes - that it would take "special measures" to protect its nuclear materials and equipment. "They did not get into details as to what that meant but clearly that was the implicit meaning of that, so we can imagine that this material is there," Grossi told a press conference on Wednesday with members of the Austrian government. "So for that, to confirm, for the whole situation, evaluation, we need to return (IAEA inspectors to Iran's nuclear facilities)."

POWs, abductees, defectors, separated families legacy of Korean War

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gimpo, June 25: Prisoners of war held for decades after the fighting stopped. Civilian abductees. Defectors. Separated families.

They are Koreans who symbolise the decades of division and bitter animosities between North and South Korea, which have been split by a heavily fortified border since the 1950-53 Korean War.

North and South Koreans aren't allowed to exchange visits, phone calls or letters with their loved ones on the other side.

Wednesday is the 75th anniversary of the war's beginning. The Associated Press spoke with Koreans whose pain and sorrow likely won't be healed anytime soon as diplomacy between the Koreas remains dormant.

South Korean prisoner of war isolated after his return home

Lee Seon-wu, who was a South

Korean soldier, lost three fingers and was captured by Chinese troops during a fierce battle in the eastern Gangwon province in the final days of the war.

Like tens of thousands of other South Korean prisoners, Lee was held by North Korea even after an armistice ended the fighting. He was forced to resettle as a miner in the country's remote northeast.

In North Korea, Lee said he belonged to the lowest social class and married a poor woman. He also lived under constant state surveillance.

In 2006, he fled to South Korea via China, only to learn that his parents and two of his three siblings had already died. Lee said he was shunned by his nephew, who likely worried Lee would demand the return of land that was originally bought with compensation money that authorities gave to his family after they wrongly concluded that Lee had died in the war.



Now 94, he doesn't stay in touch with any relatives in South Korea and misses family members in North Korea.

Lee said his three daughters in North Korea rejected his offer to flee to South Korea because they feared punishment if caught. Lee said he also has a grandson whose parents - Lee's son and daughter-in-law - died in an accident.

"I'm happy because I've returned to my homeland but I shed tears when I think about them in North Korea," Lee said during an interview at his home in Gimpo, a city near Seoul.

A total of 80 South Korean POWs have fled to South Korea since 1994, but only seven of them including Lee are still alive. In 2016, the South Korean government estimated about

500 South Korean POWs were still alive in North Korea.

North Korean daughter fights for her late South Korean POW dad

Son Myong Hwa, 63, is the North Korea-born daughter of a South Korean POW held in the North. She said her father sang and played the harmonica well but often drank alone at home and wept.

Son's father, who also worked as a miner in North Korea, died of lung cancer in 1984. Son said he left a will asking her to move his ashes to his South Korean hometown when the Koreans are unified.

Son escaped to South Korea in 2005 and brought her father's remains to South Korea with the help of her brother and sister in North Korea in 2013. Her father's remains were eventually buried at the national cemetery. But Son said her demand for the government to give her father's compensation to her

has gone unanswered because South Korean law only grants financial assistance to returning POWs, not their bereaved families.

Son has been fighting legal battles to get what she thinks she deserves. She said she can't back down now because she has lost too many things. She said she learned that her brother and sister involved in the smuggling of their father's remains were later arrested by North Korean authorities and sent to a prison camp. The trouble has left Son estranged from her two other sisters who also resettled in South Korea.

"Why am I struggling like this? I harbour ill feeling against South Korean governments because I think they've abandoned POWs left in North Korea," Son said. "I think deceased POWs also have honours to be respected so their compensation must be provided posthumously."



The FASTag ecosystem has immense potential and can provide a foundation for seamless digital travel experiences across the country
NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

INDIA AMONG TOP FINTECH HOTSPOTS GLOBALLY: WEF

A new global study Wednesday listed India among the top fintech hotspots alongside US and UK. The World Economic Forum study, released at its Annual Meeting of New Champions in China's Tianjin, also said the fintech sector growth is stabilising amid strengthening profitability and inclusion. The study revealed that fintech hotspots include UK, India, US, Singapore, Brazil and Indonesia, each of which headquartered over 10 firms and showcased a booming fintech sector.



of the day quote

The government has approved around ₹500 crore till date under Telecom Technology Development Fund to 120 projects in areas of 5G, 6G, chipsets and quantum technology
PEMMASANI CHANDRA SEKHAR | UNION MINISTER

The approved EMC (electronics manufacturing cluster) 2.0 project in Uttar Pradesh will be developed by Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA). The cluster will be spread over 200 acres and expected to attract ₹2,500 crore in investment
ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION IT MINISTER

The Indian rupee closed almost flat amid quiet regional price action. Traders are now focused on upcoming trade-related updates for short-term direction. Near-term, USD/INR has support at 85.10 and resistance at 85.90
DILIP PARMAR | RESEARCH ANALYST, HDFC SECURITIES

SHORT TAKES

UBI to raise ₹6,000cr
New Delhi: Union Bank of India Wednesday said the bank plans to garner ₹6,000 crore through a mix of equity and debt to fund its business growth. The decision in this regard was taken in the board meeting held on Wednesday, Union Bank of India said in a regulatory filing. The board approved raising of equity capital not exceeding ₹3,000 crore in tranche(s) through public issue (further public offer) and/or rights issue and/or private placements including qualified institutions placements or a combination(s) thereof to any eligible institutions. Besides, the board has also cleared a proposal to raise Basel-III compliant Additional Tier-1 (AT-1) bonds not exceeding ₹2,000 crore and Tier-2 bonds not exceeding ₹1,000 crore (including foreign currency denominated AT-1/Tier-2 bonds), it said.

CRISIL upgrades Thomas Cook India's rating
New Delhi: Thomas Cook (India) Ltd Wednesday said credit rating agency CRISIL has upgraded its long-term rating and corporate credit rating to 'Stable' from 'Positive'. The short-term rating has been reaffirmed at CRISIL A1+, the omnichannel travel services firm said. The upgrade comes on the back of Thomas Cook India Group reporting an 11 per cent revenue growth y-o-y to ₹8,251 crore in FY25 (from ₹7,405 crore in FY24), driven by strong demand across business lines. The travel segment -- accounting for over 75 per cent of total revenues -- led the surge with 15 per cent growth to ₹6,469 crore, Forex and Hospitality grew by 8 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

CDSL, IIM Mumbai sign pact
Mumbai: Central Depository Services (India) Ltd Wednesday said it has inked a pact with the Indian Institute of Management Mumbai to leverage data analytics to gain deeper intelligence in financial markets. This alliance will cover collaborative initiatives, including joint consulting, partnered research, case studies, internships, live projects, skill and competency development, and expert sessions, CDSL said in a statement. Under this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), IIM Mumbai will leverage its academic and analytical strengths to provide advanced support in sophisticated data analysis, risk management, and strategic decision-making, leveraging advanced econometric techniques and machine learning methods.

China, India oil import shift slipping Indonesian exports

Global fall in prices changed the Indian oil purchase scenario, traders have increased higher-grade coal purchases from Kazakhstan, Colombia and Mozambique

REUTERS

Beijing, June 25: Top thermal coal importers China and India are slashing Indonesian shipments of the power generating fuel in favour of energy-dense grades from elsewhere as a global fall in prices has made higher-quality coal more competitive.

Coal purchases by China and India from Indonesia, the world's biggest exporter, are dropping faster than their overall thermal coal imports, as both nations shift toward higher-calorific value (CV) coal that yields more energy per ton, industry officials say.

"Higher CV coal is more expensive, but produces more energy for every dollar spent at current prices. One million tons of higher CV coal can replace 1.2-1.3 million tons or even 1.5 million tons from Indonesia," said Vasudev Pannani, director at India-based coal trader I-Energy Natural Resources.

In China, Indonesian medium- and low-calorific thermal coal has been struggling to compete with discounted Russian supplies of similar grades, said Kpler analyst Zhiyuan Li. Ramli Ahmad, the president director of Indonesian miner Ombilin Energi, said Indonesian coal could make a comeback if prices of higher grades rise due to the Middle



East conflict, but lower-CV coal will suffer as long as more energy-dense grades are competitive.

Mongolian coal in China and South African coal in India have been the biggest gainers at Indonesia's expense, with their shares touching record highs in these markets in the first five months of 2025, Chinese customs and Indian trade data showed.

Higher production and improved efficiency will continue to boost Mongolian coal exports despite falling thermal coal prices in China as Mongolian coal has remained price-competitive, said Xue Dingcui, analyst at Mysteel.

China and India have also stepped up purchases from Tanzania, which was largely been absent from the global seaborne coal trade map until Russia's war on Ukraine in 2022.

Indian traders have also increased higher-grade coal purchases from Kazakhstan, Colombia and Mozambique this year, while Australian supplies have gained share in China.

Indonesian and Australian coal indexes, reflecting grades preferred by Chinese buyers, have been trending lower since

Vasmol launches henna crème hair colour with tribute to Rath Yatra

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Trusted hair colour brand Vasmol marked a new chapter in its 60 year legacy with the launch of Vasmol Henna Crème Hair Colour, a no-ammonia, crème-based formula inspired by the traditional goodness of natural henna.

The launch event, held at a city hotel, Bhubaneswar, was attended by media, brand leaders, and Sand artist Padma Shri Sudarsan Pattnaik, who unveiled a specially designed sand sculpture reflecting the brand's new campaign, #RootedInVasmolHenna.

Pattnaik shared, "Sand tells stories from the soil to the soul. This sculpture is my tribute to a brand that blends tradition with evolution."

Priyanka Puri, senior VP - Marketing, HRIPL, said, "This campaign is rooted in the emotion of tradition, self-expression, and generational beauty. With #RootedInVasmolHenna, we are not just



celebrating hair colour, but also honouring rituals passed down through time, reimagined for today's Indian woman. The launch of Vasmol Henna Crème is a step forward in that journey—an innovation that blends the care of tradition with the convenience of modernity. With this, every woman can now say: Surakshit rahe mere baal, Vasmol Henna Crème Hair Colour ka kamaal, with beauty that lasts—before darshan and long after."

As Rath Yatra begins, Vasmol steps forward too with a promise of safe, natural hair care rooted in legacy and made for the modern Indian woman.

SEBI slaps ₹25L penalty on BSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 25: Security Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Wednesday slapped ₹25 lakh penalty on BSE for failing to provide equal access to corporate disclosures to all stakeholders and take action against brokers with frequent modifications during trades.

The market regulator passed the order after an inspection conducted between February 2021 and September 2022. SEBI found that BSE's system architecture allowed its paid clients and internal listing compliance monitoring (LCM) team to access corporate announcements before the same were made public through its website, resulting in a breach of norms.

The regulator also observed that the data dissemination process lacked safeguards to ensure simultaneous and equal access to all stakeholders, which is critical to maintaining market integrity and preventing unfair information advantage.

Accordingly, SEBI concluded that BSE failed to comply with Regulation 39(3) of the Securities Contracts (Regulation) SECC (Stock Exchange and Clearing Corporations) Regulations, 2018.

BSE failed to initiate disciplinary action against brokers with frequent modifications and did not adequately monitor 'error accounts', raising concerns over the possibility of misuse and lack of due diligence in trades between unrelated institutional clients. "The role of stock exchanges as 'the first layer of oversight' is of much significance, while handling material price sensitive information about listed companies and their securities. Therefore, as a premier recognised stock exchange, BSE must have internal controls on how to manage and handle such corporate announcements so as to ensure compliance with its obligations," SEBI's Quasi Judicial Authority Santosh Shukla said in the order.

MARKETS SURGE ON GLOBAL RALLY

BSE SENSEX **JUNE 25, 2025**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 25: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 1 per cent Wednesday, powered by widespread buying and a positive trend in global equities amid easing tensions in the Middle East following a ceasefire between Iran and Israel.

30-share Sensex jumped 700.40 points or 0.85 per cent to settle at 82,755.51. During the day, it surged 760.8 points or 0.92 per cent to 82,815.91.

As many as 2,821 stocks advanced while 1,207 declined and 134 remained unchanged on the BSE. Similarly, the wider gauge NSE Nifty climbed 200.40 points or 0.80 per cent to 25,244.75.

"Benchmark indices extended their winning streak for a second consecutive session on Wednesday, closing decisively in the green as investor sentiment got a boost from the Israel-Iran ceasefire, which alleviated geopolitical overhang. The Nifty kicked off trade on a buoyant note, subsequently oscillated in a narrow band with a positive undertone..." according to Bajaj Broking market commentary.

From the Sensex pack, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, Power Grid, Tata Consultancy Services and Bharti Airtel were among the major gainers.

On the other hand, Bharat

Electronics, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Axis Bank were the laggards.

Meanwhile, Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani have partnered to sell automotive fuels by leveraging each other's fuel retail networks, marking the second business collaboration between the two billionaire industrialists.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.59 per cent, and the midcap index surged 0.63 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, teck surged 1.69 per cent, BSE Focused IT (1.69 per cent), IT (1.68 per cent), telecommunication (1.42 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.26 per cent), consumer durables (1.26 per cent) and healthcare (1.11 per cent).

In contrast, Capital Goods and oil & gas were the laggards. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled higher.

European markets were trading on a mixed note in mid-session trade. US markets ended significantly higher Tuesday Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.21 per cent to \$67.95 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹5,266.01 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Indian economy resilient despite global flux: RBI

REUTERS

Mumbai, June 25: India's economy remains resilient despite a state of flux in the global economy due to the twin shocks from trade and geopolitical tensions, the Reserve Bank of India said in its monthly bulletin released Wednesday.

The RBI cut its key policy rate by a larger-than-expected 50 basis points earlier this month and slashed the reserve ratio for banks as low inflation gave it room to focus on supporting growth amid volatile global conditions.

"In this state of elevated global uncertainty, various high-frequency indicators for May 2025 point towards resilient economic activity in India across the industrial



and services sectors," the RBI said in its 'State of the Economy' article.

"Agriculture showed a broad-based increase in production across most major crops during 2024-25. The domestic prices situation remains benign with headline inflation staying below the target for the fourth consecutive month in May," it said. India's annual retail infla-

tion slowed to 2.82% in May, the lowest in more than six years, from 3.16% in April.

Financial conditions remain conducive to facilitate an efficient transmission of rate cuts to the credit market, the central bank said in the bulletin.

The trade policy outcomes in July, after the temporary tariff hiatus is over, and the future course of geopolitical events would likely shape medium-term economic prospects, the RBI said.

"Going forward, as noted by the MPC (monetary policy committee) in its resolution, the MPC decided to remain data-dependent to chart the future course of monetary policy and strike the appropriate growth-inflation balance," it said.

AI appliances contribute 50% sales in H1 2025: Samsung

The adaptability of such new-age technologies is exorbitant among Indian consumers, who are looking at it as a practical solution for their requirements

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 25: Consumer Electronics major Samsung, which is increasing its play in the premium appliances segment, expects artificial intelligence-powered and internet-connected appliances to contribute 50 per cent of its total sales in the first half of 2025, a company official said.

The company expects a 'single-digit growth' overall in the refrigerator and washing segment in 2025. However, it estimates a double-digit growth in the premium segment.

Besides, the company is also increasing its retail presence and plans to add 150 more exclusive brand outlets pan India, taking the total number to 900 by the end of this year, Samsung India Vice President

Digital Appliances Business Ghufuran Alam said.

On the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in appliances, Samsung said the adaptability of such new-age technologies is exorbitant among Indian consumers, who are looking at it as a practical solution for their requirements.

Samsung is democratising its portfolio of appliances by launching more products under its AI range, from segments like washing machines, and refrigerators to residential air-conditioners.

Earlier in April 2024, Samsung India said it expects 70 per cent of appliance sales here will come from AI-powered products by the end of 2025.

"Last year (2024), AI appliances accounted for only 10 per cent of Samsung's overall



revenue in India. By the end of the year, the contribution of AI appliances to Samsung's overall sales reached 28 per cent, and this portion increased to 50 per cent as of H1 exit, 2025," Alam said.

"We do expect to reach 70 per cent by the end of this year," he added.

Moreover, the integration of AI is also helping Samsung to expand its play into the premium segment, which is witnessing higher growth across the industry, led by key factors like rising disposable incomes, rapid urbanisation, digital influence through social media and favourable demographic

shifts. "The rising sales of AI appliances have helped Samsung become the number 1 brand in premium refrigerators," he said.

"For refrigerators, the premium segment accounts for around 10 per cent of the overall refrigerator business (by value) and is estimated to be growing in double digits (15 per cent) in 2025."

When asked about the sales in the first half of 2025, Alam said in the last two months, "because of unpredictable weather, there has been some kind of softness in demand" for compressor-based cooling products like room air conditioners and refrigerators.

However, he hopes for a recovery in sales during the second half, based on the sales

data of the last few years, when people purchased these summer-centric products even during the festive season sales.

"Refrigerator is round the year product, now in AC, also, we are seeing dependability of H1 (having extreme summer months) is going down for last two years," he said.

"So, we see a robust demand, looking at the festivals, which we have, starting with Onam, and then to Durga Puja and Diwali in North India. So, we see a robust demand for these products in the second half, and we are prepared for it."

In FY24, Samsung India's total income was ₹1.02 lakh crore, where revenue from the HHP (handheld phones) segment, which covers operations relating to mobile phones & accessories, at ₹71,157.6 crore.

India eye parity after loss

Kuldeep for Shardul could be the only change in the second Test against England beginning July 2



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 25: India head coach Gautam Gambhir defended captain Shubman Gill's decision to under bowl Shardul Thakur in the series opener against England but it would be tough to justify his selection in the second Test beginning July 2.

In his first Test since December 2023, Shardul was under-utilised in the pace department and was rather underwhelming with the bat, totalling five off 20 balls across two innings.

Questions were raised about his presence in the playing eleven ahead of a specialist bowler when he rolled his arm over for six overs in the first innings before bowling 10

in the second.

Like he often does, Shardul did pick a couple of wickets out of nowhere to raise hopes of an Indian comeback on day five but the bite in his bowling was missing. He alongside the likes of Prasad Krishna offered too many loose balls, lacking consistency to test the opposition batters.

With India losing the game having controlled for a major part of five days, there is no need to ring the alarm bells but a few changes are certain in the playing eleven for the Edgbaston Test.

Experts cried out for Kuldeep Yadav's inclusion in the series opener and now he is most likely to replace Shardul with the surface expected to aid the spinners in

Mounting woes

■ Lack of depth in bowling resources was exposed during the opening Test defeat to England

■ Two late batting collapses in as many innings cost India dearly in the five-Test series opener

Birmingham.

There is a tendency to play with four pace options in England but with dry conditions expected for the majority of the English summer, there is a case of playing Kuldeep and Ravindra Jadeja in the same eleven.

Having said that, Jadeja too will under the scanner having not gotten a lot out of the rough

on day five at Headingley.

"Kuldeep Yadav has to come back. I'm sorry to say, but Shardul Thakur has to go out," former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar said on JioStar.

"That is one change India will have to make. As for Nitish Kumar Reddy - I backed him for the first Test purely based on what he did in Australia. It's an unpopular choice, because when he comes in, the balance does get affected a bit. He won't quite bowl like a fourth seamer, so India need to take a hard call: even in English conditions, they must go with quality bowlers. If that means playing two spinners, so be it."

Following England's record chase of 371 at Headingley, Gambhir was asked about

GOLDEN SPIKE

Neeraj wins, but frustration lingers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ostrava (Czech Republic), June 25: Neeraj Chopra may have clinched the Golden Spike title in his maiden appearance at the meet, but the former Olympic champion was far from satisfied with his performance.

Chopra's best throw of 85.29m was enough to secure the win in a nine-man field at the World Athletics Continental Tour Gold event here Tuesday.

"I am not that happy with my performance today, but I am very happy with the trophy I won," said Chopra. "I used to watch this meeting a lot as a kid. I watched people like Jan Zelezny and Usain Bolt winning the Golden Spike and I dreamt of winning one as well. Now the dream has come true," the double Olympic-medallist added.

Though he led the field, Chopra admitted he fell short of his own expectations, especially in front of a packed crowd.

"I know the javelin throw is very popular in Czechia. The amount of support we were getting from the crowd was crazy. I just wish I could have performed better for them,"

I am not that happy with my performance today, but I am very happy with the trophy I won. I used to watch this meeting a lot as a kid. I watched people like Jan Zelezny and Usain Bolt winning the Golden Spike and I dreamt of winning one as well. Now the dream has come true

NEERAJ CHOPRA | DOUBLE OLYMPIC-MEDALLIST

said Chopra, who breached the elusive 90m mark during his second place finish in Doha Diamond League in May.

Chopra recorded his winning effort in the third round after opening with a foul and a second throw of 83.45m. He followed up with 82.17m and 81.01m before another foul in the final round.

Despite a modest mark by his high standards, the 27-year-old continued his strong form this season, coming off a Diamond League win in Paris just days earlier. His next outing will be at the NC Classic in Bangalore July 5, where Anderson Peters and Thomas Rohler are also expected to compete.



Bengaluru Bravehearts qualify for RPL semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 25: The Bengaluru Bravehearts on Wednesday became the third team to progress to the semifinal of Season 1 of Rugby Premier League here with a 34-26 win over Kalinga Black Tigers.

In the second game of the day, the Delhi Redz and the Mumbai Dreamers played out a thrilling draw at the Shahaji Raje Bhosale Sports Complex here.

With qualification on the line for the Bengaluru Bravehearts, the Kalinga Black Tigers were looking to create hurdles. The Tigers took the lead when Ethan Turner bagged a try and Maurice Longbottom converted with ease.

The Tigers further extended their lead with Lucas Lacamp's try and Turner's conversion.

In the second game of the day, Mumbai Dreamers came from behind to salvage a draw against the Delhi Redz. Both teams were locked at 19-19 at the final whistle.

SNIPPETS

COLTS BEAT OZ, FINISH THIRD

Berlin: The Indian junior men's hockey team defeated Australia 2-1 in the battle for third place at the 4 Nations Tournament here Wednesday. Rohit (45') provided the equaliser for India before Ajeet Yadav's (52') fourth-quarter goal sealed the win. The win marks the end of India's campaign in the 4 Nations Tournament. In the pool stage, India began with a 1-7 loss to hosts Germany, bounced back with a 3-1 victory against Australia, and then endured a 1-5 defeat against Spain.



BENFICA EDGE BAYERN MUNICH

Charlotte: Benfica's Andreas Schjelderup struck in the first half to seal a 1-0 win over Bayern Munich in sweltering heat Tuesday, sending the Portuguese side to the top of Group C at the Club World Cup. After securing their first-ever victory over Bayern, Benfica will face Chelsea or Esperance de Tunis in the last 16. Bayern, finishing second, are set to face Group D leaders Flamengo. "I think our first half wasn't good at all. With the pitch and the heat, I just feared this wouldn't go as fluid as normal," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said.



GM Lalit, CM Madhesh ensure Indian sweep

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, June 25: Grandmaster Lalit Babu and Candidate Master Madhesh Kumar made it an Indian sweep as they emerged champions in contrasting fashion in the Rs 40 lakh prize money Mumbai International Grandmaster and Junior Chess Tournament, which concluded at the World Trade Centre, here Wednesday.

While Lalit Babu won his ninth and final round encounter against top-seeded Georgian GM Lavin Pantsulaia to tally 8 points, he had to spend anxious moments as Armenian GM Mamikon Gharibyan also tallied 8 points, winning his final match against Indian GM Neeloptal Das.

However, Lalit Babu's higher tie-break score of 54.5, as compared to Gharibyan's 54, ensured that he laid his hands on the glittering trophy and took home the winner's purse of Rs 4 lakhs. Gharibyan's sec-



ond-place finish was worth Rs 3 lakhs. Another Indian, Deepan Chakravarthy, finished in fifth place, winning Rs 1.25 lakh.

In comparison, teen prodigy Madhesh, who impressed with calm and focused play, won the title outright, with eight points, scoring a last-round win over Vyom Malhotra.

Madhesh earned Rs 2 lakh for his fine performance, while Advik Agrawal finished

runner-up and earned Rs 1.5 lakhs. Top seed Aansh Nerurkar had to settle for third place and Rs 1 lakh. The fourth and fifth places were secured by CM Madhvendra Pratap Sharma (Rs 75,000) and Jagreet Mishra (Rs 50,000), respectively.

Sannidhi Bhat was adjudged the Best Female Player and won Rs 45,000 plus a trophy, while Rachit Gurnani and Mysha Perwez emerged the best among the Mumbai Boys and Girls, respectively, winning Rs 30,000 each and a trophy.

9-year-old Indian prodigy holds Carlsen to a draw

New Delhi: Nine-year-old Aarit Kapil from Delhi came close to defeating world No 1 Magnus Carlsen before settling for a draw in the 'Early Titled Tuesday' chess tournament held on a leading online platform. Aarit, the runner-up at the recent Under-9 National Championship, matched the five-time world champion move for move and had Carlsen in a completely lost position. But with time running out and only a few seconds left on his clock, the young Indian was unable to convert his advantage and eventually forced a draw in a rook versus two minor pieces endgame. Aarit played this event from his hotel in Georgia where he is currently battling for a podium finish in the under-10 World championship. Aarit has scored victories in the first two rounds and will play his third game Wednesday.



Rajasthan Royals owner accuses former co-owner Raj Kundra of blackmail

REUTERS

London, June 25: Indian Premier League cricket franchise Rajasthan Royals' majority owner Wednesday accused his former co-owner of trying to blackmail him by alleging he was defrauded out of his minority stake in the club.

London-based venture capitalist Manoj Badale and his company Emerging Media Ventures are suing businessman Raj Kundra at London's High Court for allegedly breaching a 2019 confidential settlement agreement.

The case centres on Kundra's former shares in Rajasthan Royals, winner of 2008's inaugural IPL which is now cricket's richest tournament with a brand value of \$12 billion.

Badale's lawyer Adam Speker said Kundra, who is married to Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty, had threatened to report serious allegations to Indian authorities in a "blackmail attempt".

KAPIL DEV LED INDIA TO ITS MAIDEN WORLD CUP TITLE AFTER BEATING TWO-TIME CHAMPIONS WEST INDIES, A VICTORY THAT MARKED A DEFINING MOMENT IN INDIAN CRICKET HISTORY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 25: In the past four years, whenever June 25 comes, absence of one of the most vibrant members of the '83' whatsapp group rankles the other 13.

It is now almost four years since Yashpal Sharma left this world but there is not a single day that 'Yash Paaji' isn't missed by his teammates.

Just before Covid-19 hit, Yashpal, who was a selector in Punjab, had come to watch a Ranji Trophy match Delhi and lamented to a couple of journalists present there about not having a recording of India's first match against West Indies at Old Trafford where his 89 paved the way for an improbable 34-run win.

"I was ready to offer GBP 5000 to anyone who had the re-

ording. I didn't get it. That was perhaps my best ODI knock. It seemed Maco (Malcolm Marshall) had an unwritten deal with me. Mere aate hi do gaaend chaati pe maarta thaa (At least two deliveries, I would take on my ribs)," Yashpal, who was the top scorer with 240 runs in the tournament, fondly recalled on that December day.

The candour is deeply missed by his teammates. "Yes, he was a very popular member of the team and he is missed by every one of us," the legendary Sunil Gavaskar told PTI when asked about the only member, who is no longer with them.

The 83 whatsapp group comprises the 14 members of that team and administrative manager PR Man Singh.

Whether the team wins the Border Gavaskar Trophy un-



der Ravi Shastri or Roger Binny becomes BCCI president or for that matter Kirti Azad wins Lok Sabha elections, the group is always buzzing.

"We are in touch almost every day but most certainly today," Gavaskar said.

Back in 2008, the Vijay Malviya owned UB Group had organised the 25th anniversary celebration at the iconic Lord's with all team members present on that historic balcony.

In 2023, the Adani Group had also felicitated the members on the 40th anniversary of the Cup win.

However, this time with Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri busy with their media commitments for the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy and Dilip Vengsarkar also out of the country, the planned celebrations have been kept on hold.

"We had planned one this year but with the current series

I was just 10 when India won the World Cup on this day in 1983. That moment sparked a dream, and that dream became my journey

SACHIN TENDULKAR

we had to postpone it. We have had a few celebrations on other years too. Two years back on the 40th anniversary, the Adani's felicitated the team at their headquarters in Ahmedabad," Gavaskar recalled.

It is 42 years and at least two more golden generations have also walked into the sunset since that day when first seeds of a behemoth called Indian cricket were sown.

"...1983 was huge. Watching Kapil Dev, Sandhu, Madan Lal, Roger Binny, Sandeep Patil at Lord's was huge. It inspired us a lot to take up cricket," one of India's greatest captains, Sourav Ganguly, told PTI in a recent podcast.

The stories associated with the tournament are still fresh and told and retold to the passing generations. They have all aged and have

vague memories. Kapil was candid enough to tell young reporters recently that he doesn't remember anything from that historic innings.

They are also scattered in different parts of India. Gavaskar and Shastri live out of suitcases as premier broadcasters, and are voices of Indian cricket. Krish Srikanth runs a successful Tamil YouTube channel with his son Anirudha, having been a chairman of selectors. Vengsarkar runs one of Mumbai's most successful academies with branches in Pune.

Sunil Valson lives in a quaint hill station in Northern India, Madan Lal runs his academy at Siri Fort and is an expert on TV channels while Syed Kirmani recently wrote his autobiography.

So did Mohinder Amarnath, who lives in Goa. Kirti Azad shuttles between Anasol and Delhi while dealing with voices in Trinamool Congress that consider him an outsider.

Binny is the BCCI president and probably, the quietest one among all those that the country's cricket establishment has ever heard.