



Triptii's advice

Actor Triptii Dimri reveals a powerful piece of advice that transformed her acting approach

LEISURE | P2



Biggest air strike

Russia launches its biggest aerial attack against Ukraine, part of an escalating bombing campaign

INTERNATIONAL | P10



AI driven future

Indian IT majors aggressively reposition themselves as AI-native firms, focusing on high-margin applications

BUSINESS | P11



Historic triumph

Chennai Bulls gives a brilliant performance to win the inaugural Rugby Premier League title with a 41-0 victory over Delhi Redz

SPORTS | P12

HOUSELISTING OPS FROM APRIL 1, 2026

New Delhi: The houselisting operations for the forthcoming Census will begin from April 1, 2026, marking the start of the first phase of the decennial exercise, the Registrar General of India has said. In a letter to chief secretaries of states and Union Territories, Census Commissioner and Registrar General of India Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan said the Houselisting Operations and Housing Census shall begin April 1, 2026. Before that, the appointment of supervisors, enumerators and work distribution among them shall be done with cooperation from states and district administration, it said. The Census is a two-phase exercise -- in phase one i.e. Houselisting Operation (HLO), the housing conditions, assets and amenities of each household will be collected. P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



She says Delhi is fully prepared to host the Olympics. The whole world can come here at their own risk



SEA OF FAITH: People in large numbers gather near the three chariots near Gundicha temple in Puri, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

MONSOON COVERS COUNTRY; 2 DEAD IN UTTARAKHAND

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Shimla/Uttarakhand, June 29: A cloudburst in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district early Sunday left two construction workers dead and seven missing as monsoon covered the entire country almost a week earlier than usual, bringing rain in the national capital and other northern states, triggering landslides in several hilly areas and sending rivers into spate.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for heavy rainfall June 29 and 30 in various districts of Uttarakhand, including Uttarkashi, Rudrapur, Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri, Haridwar and Nainital. Authorities have put the Chardham yatra on hold for a day for the safety of pilgrims.

The Shimla Meteorological Centre has also issued a red alert for very heavy downpour in 10 districts of Himachal Pradesh, where the death toll from rain-related incidents climbed to 20 since the onset of monsoon in the state June 20.

In Uttarakhand, a landslide triggered by a cloudburst destroyed the shelters of workers engaged in the construction of a hotel along the Yamunotri National Highway in Uttarkashi district, officials said. More P8

Flood alert in Balasore, Mayurbhanj districts P5

3 KILLED 50 INJURED 6 BATTLING FOR LIFE

Deadly stampede at Puri

PNN & AGENCIES

Puri, June 29: Three persons, including two women, were killed and over 50 others injured in a stampede near Shree Gundicha Temple in Puri early Sunday during a ceremony related to the ongoing Rath Yatra festivities, officials said.

The incident took place around 4.20am when thousands of devotees had gathered near the chariots parked in front of the temple, they said. The injured have been admitted to a nearby hospital where the condition of six people is stated to be critical. The Gundicha Temple, located around 3km from the 12th century shrine, is the aunt's house of Lord Jagannath and his siblings Subhadra and Balabhadra.

During Rath Yatra, the deities visit their aunt's home, stay there for seven days, and then return to their main abode — Srimandir.

According to police, chaos ensued after two trucks carrying 'Charamala' materials for rituals reportedly entered the crowded spot near the chariots of Lord Jagannath

and his sibling deities. "Thousands of devotees had assembled outside the temple since the early hours to catch a glimpse of the deities when the 'Pahuda' (cloth) covering the front portion of the chariots was to be removed, as part of the rituals, the officials said.

The deceased were identified as Basanti Sahu, 36, from Gobardhanpur (Khurda), and Premakant Mohanty, 78, from Nayapalli (Bhubaneswar) and Pravati Das, 42, from Balipatna.

Their bodies have been handed over to family members.

Following the stampede, Chief Minister Mohan Majhi ordered the transfer of District Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain and SP Vineet Agrawal. He also suspended two police officers, DCP Bishnu Pati and Commandant Ajay Padhi, an official release said.

The CM ordered an administrative inquiry into the matter to be carried out under the supervision of Development Commissioner Anu Garg.

In another order, senior bureaucrat Saswata Mishra was appointed Principal Sec-



retary to the CM in addition to his current responsibilities. The 1996-batch IAS officer is presently posted as Principal Secretary in Finance department with additional charge of Chairman, IDCO. The state government will provide financial assistance of Rs 25 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased, the release added.

Another notification issued by the General Administration Department stated that senior bureaucrat Aravind Agarwal will be in-charge of Rath Yatra supervision.

Earlier in a post on X, Majhi sought forgiveness from devotees of Lord Jagannath for

Probe report in 30 days: Min

Bhubaneswar: Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan Sunday said that an administrative inquiry into the Puri stampede incident that left three people dead and 50 others injured would be completed within 30 days. He said Development Commissioner Anu Garg will submit her inquiry report to the Chief Minister within the stipulated 30 days.

the stampede, and tendered an apology on behalf of his government for the incident.

"Due to intense eagerness among devotees to have a glimpse of Mahaprabhu... an unfortunate incident occurred because of the resulting jostling and chaos. I and my government seek forgiveness from all Jagannath devotees. We express our condolences to the families of devotees who lost their lives... pray to Mahaprabhu Jagannath to grant them the strength to bear this profound sorrow," Majhi said.

He also said that security lapses behind the incident would be probed and those found guilty will face stringent action.

State Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said the situation is now normal at the Shree Gundicha Temple, where devotees are offering prayers to the deities. According to officials, devotees gathered to witness the sacred 'Pahandi Bije' of Lord Jagannath and his siblings. During the ritual, known as 'Adapa Mandap Bije', the sibling deities were ceremonially taken in a grand procession to the Gundicha Temple.

Puri's titular king, Gajapati Maharaja Divyasingha Deb, expressed shock over the stampede, and appealed to the state government to carry out a comprehensive inquiry.

Health department sources said among those critically injured, one has been shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, while five others are in ICU.

A host of political leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and BJD chief Naveen Patnaik condoled the deaths, with many criticising the state government over arrangements for the Rath Yatra. More P3

'Sevikas' in 'sishu vaticas' to aid pre-primary edu



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 29: The government Sunday decided to appoint 'sevikas' to take care of children in all 'sishu vaticas' across the state to support pre-primary education and reduce the non-teaching workload of school teachers.

The decision was approved by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the CMO said in a statement. 'Sishu vaticas', launched in the current academic year under the National Education Policy (NEP), are functioning in over 45,000 government primary schools across the state.

These centres provide pre-primary education to children aged 5 to 6 years. "The 'sevikas' will assist

children in the classrooms and take care of their basic needs, which will help ease the burden on teachers and improve the quality of early education," the statement said.

The 'sevikas' will receive remuneration on par with cooks engaged under the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme.

A recent situational study conducted by the government found that teachers were overburdened with managing classroom discipline and childcare in 'sishu vaticas', impacting the teaching process.

The 'sevikas' will receive remuneration on par with cooks engaged under the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme

The CM expressed hope that the move would help in improving the quality of education of children at the pre-primary stage. "Managing and taking care of small children in classrooms is a major responsibility. If this responsibility is left to the teachers, the education system will be disrupted," the statement said.

Storm over Indian defence attache's Op Sindoor remarks

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 29: A comment by India's defence attache to Indonesia, Captain Shiv Kumar, explaining India's strategy in the initial phase of Operation Sindoor has led to a huge political storm.

During a recent presentation at a seminar in an Indonesian university, Captain Kumar said the operation faced 'constraint' as the 'political leadership' did not want the Indian Air Force (IAF) to attack Pakistani military installations and their air defence assets. "India did lose some air-

craft, but it was because of constraints given by the political leadership to not attack Pak military establishment or their air defences," Captain Kumar was quoted as saying at the seminar in Indonesia June 10.

Meanwhile, the Congress Sunday cited the reported comments of Captain Shiv Kumar and accused the government of having 'misled' the country. The party also asked why Prime Minister Narendra Modi is 'refusing' to preside over an all-party meeting to take the Opposition into confidence and why the demand for a special session of Parliament has been rejected. P9

Mumbai mosques go digital with 'azan app'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 29: In the backdrop of curbs over the use of loudspeakers, half-a-dozen mosques in Mumbai have registered on a dedicated mobile phone application which relays the 'azan', or call to prayer, directly to the faithful in real-time.

The app, Online Azan, has been developed by a Tamil Nadu-based company.

Given the restrictions and sensitivities surrounding the use of loudspeakers for the call to prayer, the dedicated mobile app helps relay the azan directly to worshippers from local

SOUND OF INNOVATION



mosques, Fahad Khalil Pathan, managing trustee of Mahim Juma Masjid, told PTI.

The free app will allow users to listen to the azan at home, especially during Ramadan

(the Islamic holy month of fasting) and other times when public announcements are restricted, he explained. "The initiative comes after a police crackdown on the use of loud-

speakers, where officers visited the mosque (Juma Masjid) and warned loudspeaker use could result in action. This led to the mosque temporarily disabling its sound system," Pathan stated. To ensure that spiritual experience remains uninterrupted, especially for the elderly and those residing nearby (the mosque), the Juma Masjid in the Mahim area has adopted the app, he said.

The app was developed with technical support from a team of IT professionals from Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, and is now available on Android devices and iPhones. The app plays a live audio

stream of the azan through mobile phones, exactly when it is delivered from the mosque. Worshippers who cannot physically hear the azan due to sound restrictions can now receive it through this app in real-time, Pathan said. The app also serves a larger community purpose by notifying users about prayer times and can be used like a smart watch alert system. Once installed and configured, it runs automatically.

Worshippers have praised the initiative, stating that even when loudspeakers are off, they can now still stay connected to their neighbourhood mosque's azan through their mobile phones.

leisure



ENRIQUE IGLESIAS ADDS NEW SHOW IN MUMBAI

Singer-songwriter Enrique Iglesias, who is set to perform in Mumbai later this year, has added another show in Mumbai considering an overwhelming demand. The newly added performance will take place Wednesday, October 29, 2025, at the MMRDA Grounds in the BKC area of Mumbai.

CHARLIZE THERON SLAMS US ADMINISTRATION

Charlize Theron is getting political, and is not mincing words. The actress recently gave remarks about immigration, LGBTQ and women's rights and the devastating cuts to foreign aid. The actress attended the 5th annual Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Program Block Party on the Universal lot.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
 You will want to catch up with old friends that you have been neglecting for some time. The stars suggest that you will enjoy yourself. Your excitement will brighten up your activities. Your frankness and honesty are what set you apart from others, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
 This day you will tend to be too bossy, too harsh on your subordinates or employees and end up making them miserable as well as hostile. Their insubordination could corrode the respect you get and, in addition, make things unworkable. This acrimony and ill will is sure to spread and foul up your larger professional connections and interests.

GEMINI
 You will try to think up creative ways to perform your daily routine to get a break from the boredom and the rut of your daily schedule. You need to mingle more with people and practice some humility. Guests will come visiting at your home. You will spend the evening in conversation with your family, friends or neighbours, says Ganesha.

CANCER
 The day looks set to be so good that you may end up inviting jealousy and envy from people around you. The stars are favourable for matters pertaining to heart. In short, a great day for boosting love and relationships. Fantastic opportunities may come your way, if you have been looking to woo a sweetheart, whispers Ganesha.

LEO
 It is an important day for you. Everyone in the office will accept your capabilities and will praise you. You may incur expenses on entertainment and luxuries. Your financial difficulties will now be solved. It is better to have an eye on long term gains. A progressive day on the whole, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
 Today will be a pleasant day full of surprises and unforeseen changes. You may go for a long drive with your beloved. The trip will be very interesting and will calm your frayed nerves. All in all, Ganesha says, it is an optimistic and happy day, so go ahead and get the best out of it.

LIBRA
 Ganesha says today you will use your mental competency to complete all your work on time. You may not give complete attention to your family as you will be spending time in the office or at work. Your extraordinary intelligence will be showcased at work today. Ganesha says do not forget your family which has played a huge role in your success.

SCORPIO
 You are one social butterfly today. However, shunning the gossips, you spread kindness and happiness in your social groups. People will look up to you today for this reason. What goes around, comes around; spread joy and you are sure to receive joy, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
 It's time for some entertainment. Movies, picnics and dining out is on your mind. Invite your beloved and enjoy quality time with each other. Also, you will spend time with you family and friends, and attend a music concert together.

CAPRICORN
 Though you leave no stone unturned to identify the opportunities coming your way, you need to keep your guards on whenever you are a part of a legal matter. Financially, you're likely to bear some heavy losses, and if you're a dealer or a broker, the chances of suffering from them are even higher. Take some precautionary measures well in advance, advises Ganesha.

AQUARIUS
 You wish to have more than twenty-four hours in a day! You are determined to finish off your pending work but somehow you will find it extremely difficult to get the load off your shoulders. You will try everything; from canceling your vacations to postponing your dates, but nothing will seem enough, feels Ganesha.

PISCES
 Ganesha feels that you will sympathize with people today. This will help you get people's good wishes. You can prove to be a good boss, co worker, husband or wife and son or daughter. Ganesha advises you to carry on with these virtues.

One thing that Katrina can't deal with

Mumbai: Actor Vicky Kaushal recently shared a lighthearted glimpse into his married life with Katrina Kaif, revealing she gives him blunt, honest feedback on his acting — but doesn't like it when he returns the favour.
 In a candid chat Vicky, who has completed 10 years in the industry, said Katrina is straightforward yet respectful, acknowledging the hard work that goes into performance. "She tells me exactly what she thinks, good or bad, and I love that," he said, adding it's rare to get such clear feedback. However, Vicky admitted with a grin that Katrina prefers encouragement when the roles are reversed.
 A short clip of this conversation posted on Reddit drew mixed reactions. Some

viewers joked, "If you're dishing it out, you should be able to take it too," while others called Katrina's approach a "classic double standard."
 Professionally, both stars are thriving. Vicky's latest film *Chhaava*, directed by Laxman Utekar, turned into a blockbuster, crossing 800 crore globally. His performance received praise from both fans and critics. Katrina was last seen in *Merry Christmas* with Vijay Sethupathi, which received a mixed response but earned her praise for a bold and refreshing performance.



Triptii's turning point in career

Mumbai: Triptii Dimri has steadily carved a niche in the film industry with films like *Laila Majnu*, *Bulbbul*, and *Qala*, showcasing impressive growth and versatility. Despite facing criticism for her role in *Animal*, she remains committed to improving her craft. In a recent interview, Triptii revealed a powerful piece of advice that transformed her acting approach, given by actor and coach Saurabh Sachdeva.
 While preparing for an audition, she struggled to grasp her character and sought Sachdeva's guidance. He agreed to train her and conducted a three-day workshop. During this, he told her, "You are judging your character." He explained that an actor cannot truthfully portray a role if they judge it. Even if the character's actions are wrong, like murder, the actor must believe in them while performing. "You have to be your character's best friend," he advised.
 This advice deeply impacted Triptii, helping her shift perspective and perform without judgment, always trying to find a "happy place" in her character. In a twist of fate, Sachdeva later became her co-actor in *Animal*, completing a meaningful circle in her journey. Triptii will next be seen in *Dhadak 2* with Siddhant Chaturvedi, releasing August 1.



Shanaya on embracing criticism

Mumbai: Shanaya Kapoor, daughter of Sanjay and Maheep Kapoor, is gearing up for her Bollywood debut with *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan* opposite Vikrant Massey. In a recent interview, Shanaya addressed the criticism she has faced even before her official debut. She admitted that fame inevitably attracts comments, but she has chosen to take them positively, calling it a learning experience. "I've taken it as feedback and grown from it," she shared, crediting her parents for raising her with confidence.
 Reflecting on her journey, Shanaya described the last few years as a unique experience, saying everything happens for a reason. She expressed gratitude for waiting before stepping into films, acknowledging that while the industry is unpredictable, her own path has been relatively easier than others.
 However, a Reddit clip of her interview sparked backlash, with users mocking her references to a "journey" and struggles, calling her remarks out of touch. Sarcastic comments flooded in, such as, "The only journey she's been on is from her living room to the film set."
 Previously, Karan Johar had announced *Bedhadak* as Shanaya's launch film, but it never progressed beyond its 2023 announcement, leaving *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan* as her true debut.



'Negativity fuels your motivation'

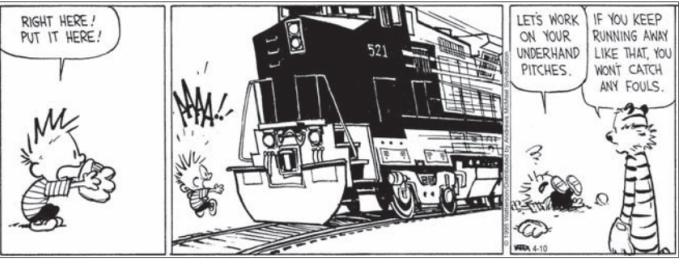
"They help keep the fire inside you burning. I actually think we need people like that—those who challenge you, who look down on you. They still exist, and I'm thankful for their presence.
 When asked if it affects him mentally, Vikrant Massey responded that it doesn't disturb him at all. In fact, he said such negativity fuels his motivation and drives him to do better."

IAN S

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

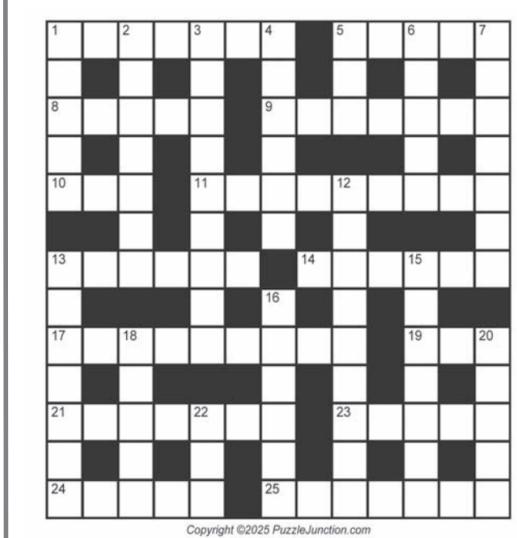


BREVITY



FUN POST

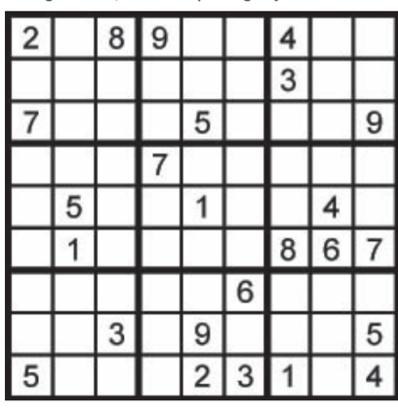
CROSSWORD



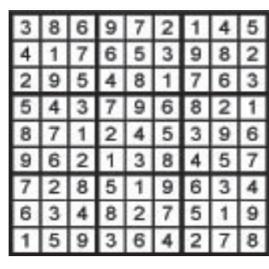
- Across
- 1 Enthusiastic applause
 - 5 Honour item
 - 8 Kind of poem
 - 9 Simple wind instrument
 - 10 Needing a lift
 - 11 Irons and woods, e.g. (4-5)
 - 13 Charging need
 - 14 Black mark
 - 17 Office staff
 - 19 Zodiac animal
 - 21 Hawaiian guitar
 - 23 Pre-entree course
 - 24 Artist's stand
 - 25 Taqueria offering
- Down
- 1 Cantina pots
 - 2 Shorten
 - 3 In disguise
 - 4 Pasta piece
 - 5 ___ king
 - 6 "Farewell, mon ami"
 - 7 Saltwater lake (4,3)
 - 12 They make things happen
 - 13 Apprehend
 - 15 Great ape
 - 16 Bug
 - 18 Swamp plants
 - 20 Newspapers and television, e.g.
 - 22 Electric fish

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

Students participate in a drawing competition organised by Asit Mukherjee Smruti Sansad at Sriram Chandra Bhawan in Cuttack Sunday



downtown

ADAPA MANDAP BIJE



Lord Sudarshan, and the sibling deities - Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath - being ceremonially taken in a grand procession called 'Adapa Pahandi' to Gundicha Temple in Puri Sunday

OP PHOTOS

Major bureaucratic rejig after stampede claims 3

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 29: Hours after a deadly stampede near Gundicha Temple in Puri claimed three lives and rendered over 50 devotees injured, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday ordered a major administrative shake-up.

With several crucial Rath Yatra events approaching, the CM has reassigned experienced IAS and IPS officers to ensure tighter coordination and public safety.

In a decisive move, ADG (Police Modernisation) SK Priyadarshi has been placed in overall charge of police arrangements for the Rath Yatra and related rituals in addition to his existing responsibilities, an official said.

Further strengthening the top administrative structure, senior bureaucrat Saswata Mishra has been appointed as Principal Secretary to the CM, a post lying vacant since Nikunja Dhal proceeded on central deputation.

Mishra will also continue as Principal Secretary, Finance department, and Chairman, IDCO.

The CM has also engaged former Puri Collector Arvind Agarwal as the overall in-charge of the Car Festival for the remaining days.

The administrative action came swiftly after the stampede sparked nationwide outrage.

Within hours, Puri Collector Siddharth Sekhar Swain and Puri SP Vinit Agarwal were removed from their posts.



KEY SHAKE-UPS

SASWATA MISHRA HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO THE CM

ADG (POLICE MODERNISATION) SK PRIYADARSHI HAS BEEN PLACED IN CHARGE OF POLICE ARRANGEMENTS FOR RATH YATRA

FORMER PURI COLLECTOR ARVIND AGARWAL AS THE OVERALL IN-CHARGE OF THE CAR FESTIVAL

PURI COLLECTOR SIDDHARTH SEKHAR SWAIN AND PURI SP VINIT AGARWAL WERE REMOVED FROM THEIR POSTS

Additionally, DCP Vishnu Pati and Commandant Ajay Padhi have been suspended from service.

DIG STF Pinak Mishra has been appointed as the new Puri SP. Despite his promotion to DIG rank, Mishra has been directed to function as SP during

the Yatra, citing the critical nature of the role. Sources confirmed he assumed charge within hours of the transfer order.

To ensure full transparency, Majhi has ordered an administrative inquiry into the incident, to be conducted by Development Commissioner Anu Garg, a senior officer known for her firm administrative approach.

The inquiry will aim to determine lapses and recommend corrective measures.

Some of the most significant upcoming events are Sandhya Darshan (evening darshan) July 4, Bahuda Jatra (return car festival) July 5, Suna Besa (golden attire of deities on chariots) July 6 and Niladeri Bijeh (deities return to main temple) July 8.

These events attract lakhs of devotees, with the Suna Besa expected to draw maximum people. "The congregation may exceed 15 lakh this year for the Suna Besa," a temple official said.

Gajapati Maharaja seeks comprehensive probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, June 29: Puri's titular Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb Sunday expressed shock over the stampede during the famed Rath Yatra and appealed to the Odisha government to immediately carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the incident.

The titular king, who is also the chairman of Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee, urged the state government to take proper and immediate steps to prevent the recurrence of any such incident.

"Shree Gajapati Maharaja has appealed to the state government to carry out a prompt and comprehensive inquiry regarding this most unfortunate incident and to take proper and immediate steps to prevent the recurrence of such incidents," his office said in a statement.

Deb said he was "shocked and deeply saddened to learn about the stampede last night near Gundicha Temple in which three devotees lost their lives and many others were injured". He also offered prayers for the departed souls.

Protecting lives paramount: Rahul

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 29: Condemning the loss of lives in the stampede near Gundicha Temple in Puri, Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi Sunday said protecting lives is paramount and any lapse in this responsibility is unacceptable.

He said the tragedy is a serious warning that security arrangements and crowd management for such big events should be taken seriously and must be reviewed.

"The stampede during Rath Yatra in Puri is extremely saddening. My deepest condolences to the bereaved families, and I hope for the speedy recovery of the injured devotees," Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

He appealed to the Odisha government to speed up the relief work and urged Congress workers to help in every possible way.

"This tragedy is a serious warning - security arrangements and crowd management for such big events should be taken seriously and must be reviewed," the Congress leader said.



Family members of a stampede victim crying inconsolably on Puri DHH premises Sunday

OP PHOTO

"Protecting lives is paramount, and any lapse in this responsibility is unacceptable," he asserted.

At least three people, including two women, were killed and around 50 sustained injuries in the stampede near Shree Gundicha Temple Sunday morning, officials said.

The incident took place at around 4 am when hundreds of devotees gathered near the temple to witness Rath Yatra festivities, Puri District Collector Siddharth S Swain said.

The injured have been admitted to a nearby hospital, and the condition of six of them is critical, he said at the time of this

report was filed.

Chaos ensued after two trucks carrying materials for rituals reportedly entered the crowded spot near the chariots of Lord Jagannath and his sibling deities, officials said.

Devotees in large numbers had assembled outside the temple since the early hours to catch a glimpse of the deities when the 'Pahuda' (cloth) covering their faces was to be removed, as part of the rituals, they said. The deceased were identified as Basanti Sahu, 36, of Khurda Gobardhanpur, and Premakant Mohanty, 78, of Nayapalli in Bhubaneswar and Pravati Das, 42, from Balipatna.

Guv expresses grief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 29: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Sunday expressed grief over the death of three persons in a stampede near Lord Jagannath's chariots in Puri.

Kambhampati, in a post on X, said, "Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of lives in the unfortunate stampede at Saradhabali, Puri. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families."

"I pray to Mahaprabhu Jagannatha to grant strength to those in mourning and bless the injured with a swift and complete recovery. May His divine grace bring solace and healing to all affected by this tragedy," he said.

Cong, BJD teams visit Puri to assess situation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 29: In the wake of the tragic stampede at Saradhabali near Gundicha Temple in the wee hours of Sunday claiming three lives and leaving over 50 injured, the Opposition Congress and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) have formed teams for ground assessment.

The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) team includes former MLA Santosh Singh Saluja, senior leaders Nandendra Kumar Pradhan, Jagannath Patnaik and former OPCC president Prasad Harichandan.

Similarly, the BJD delegation included Rajya Sabha MP Subhasish Khuntia, MLA Tusharkanti Behera, senior leader Sanjay Das Burma, and the president and vice president of Zilla Parishad, Puri.

Speaking to media, Harichandan said first there was an inordinate delay in chariot pulling, then there was assault on journalists and now people have died in stampede. "Tragedy seems to have gone rampant this Rath Yatra," he added.

He further said, "As per the instruction of OPCC chief

Bhakta Charan Das, we have constituted a team of senior leaders who will visit those injured in the stampede. Seeing the recent incident, we are concerned about the devotees for upcoming Bahuda Yatra and others rituals. We demand stringent action against those responsible for the incident."

The Congress demanded Rs 50 lakh ex gratia to the family of the deceased and Rs 25 lakh to the injured persons. The team also sought the resignation of CM, Deputy CMs and Law Minister over the issue, on moral grounds.

BJD's Das Burma said, "We have visited the stampede site and had discussions with concerned administrative officers. As preparations are underway for 'Adapa Mandap Bijeh' and other rituals, we pray for their smooth conduct."

He also said, "Transferring and suspending some officers is not the solution. The state government's ministerial panel to oversee the arrangements for the Rath Yatra has failed completely." The administration also utterly failed to manage the affairs.



IN SPATE: Water level of Mahanadi near Jobra Barrage in Cuttack witnesses a rise as incessant rains lash the upper catchment areas

OP PHOTO

Bengal man nabbed for stealing phones in Puri

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 29: The Crime Prevention and Detection Squad (CPDS) of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has apprehended an individual from West Bengal involved in the theft of passenger belongings at Puri Railway Station.

As part of a special drive aimed at curbing unauthorised passenger movement and preventing the theft of passenger belongings (TOPB), the CPDS team conducted intensive patrolling and surveillance across the station premises.

During the operation Saturday a suspicious individual was intercepted near the station's main gate. Upon investigation, the person was found in possession of two stolen mobile phones—a sky blue OPPO 10-K and a grey Samsung S24 Ultra—valued at approximately Rs 1,50,000.

The stolen items were identified as the property of a passenger currently at the station.

During interrogation, the accused confessed to the theft and identified himself as Rajesh Singh, a resident of West Bengal.

The accused was brought to the RPF Post at Puri.

Global Odia diaspora celebrates Rath Yatra

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 29: The Odia diaspora and Jagannath devotees around the world recently celebrated Rath Yatra with deep spiritual fervour and cultural zeal.

From the UK and USA to Japan, Australia, and France, the sacred chariot festival brought communities together in vibrant celebrations, reflecting a shared devotion and cultural unity.

United Kingdom: A grand celebration in Slough

The UK witnessed one of its largest Rath Yatra celebrations Saturday at Upton Court Park, Slough, organised by the Shree Jagannatha Society UK (SJSUK). Over 1,000 devotees gath-



ered for the spiritual sojourn. The deities of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra were brought from Shri Ram Mandir, Southall, to the park, and onward to Slough Hindu Mandir, representing their traditional journey to their aunt's temple, Gundicha Mandir.

The ceremonial Pahandi Bije, Chhera Pahanra was performed by dignitaries including Sujit Ghosh, Deputy High Commissioner of India in London, and Arun Thakur, acting chairperson and trustee of Shri Ram Mandir Southall, and the chariot pulling were conducted with deep reverence. The chariots, constructed by vol-

unteers, were pulled amidst soulful bhajans, kirtans, and chants of 'Hari Bol'. The event highlighted the unity and spiritual devotion of the Odia community and devotees in the UK, with similar celebrations held in London and Manchester.

United States: From New York to Denver



In USA, the Rath Yatra was celebrated with grandeur in cities like New York, Ohio, and Denver. The ISKCON New York organised a magnificent parade from 45th Street to Washington Square Park, attracting large crowds and spreading spiritual joy. In Denver, the Hindu Temple hosted the festival with traditional rituals and community participation, reflecting the vibrant devotion of the local Odia and Indian communities.

Australia: Hobart witnesses cultural grandeur



In Australia, the festival was celebrated in Hobart, organised by the Shree Swaminarayan Mandir. The Odia community, along with other devotees, came together in a colourful and devotional celebration, showcasing Indian spiritual traditions in the Southern Hemisphere.

France & Japan: Bridging cultures through devotion

In Paris, the car festival was organised by Indian Diaspora Paris, drawing people of various nationalities to witness and participate in the sacred chariot procession. In Kawasaki, Japan, the festival created a beautiful blend of Indian tradition and Japanese cultural harmony, symbolising the universal appeal of Lord Jagannath.



The Rath Yatra continues to serve as a profound symbol of divine love, inclusiveness, and cultural unity, bringing together devotees from all walks of life across continents. The global celebration reinforces the timeless relevance of this ancient festival, transcending geographical boundaries to unite the world in devotion to the Lord of the Universe.

RLD makes political debut in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 29: Marking its formal entry into Odisha's political landscape, the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) Saturday announced the formation of its state unit and appointment of youth leader and social activist Jitendra Kumar Hati as the state president.

The announcement was made by RLD national general secretary Trilok Tyagi during a press meet at the Press Club here. Also present was the party's National Advisor Ashish Kumar, who pledged full support to the new state leadership. Tyagi stated that this is the



first time the party is establishing an organisational base

in Odisha with an aim to expand its political presence in

the region. He said the party will focus on key issues like farmers' distress, women's empowerment, access to clean drinking water, education, healthcare, and unemployment.

He also confirmed RLD's intent to contest in the upcoming panchayat and general elections in the state.

Newly-appointed state chief Jitendra Kumar Hati said he is committed to strengthening the party at the grassroots by addressing real issues, especially those affecting farmers, and working towards the sustainable development of Odisha's mineral resources.

Min Patra reviews Rabi paddy procurement

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 29: With the Rabi paddy procurement season drawing to a close, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra Saturday visited the State Food Supply Corporation to review the progress of procurement.

He held discussions with officials to assess the current status and urged timely completion of the process to ensure smooth delivery and support to farmers.

State Civil Supplies Corporation managing director K Sudarshan Chakravarty briefed Patra on the progress made so far. Senior officials from the department were also present during the review meeting.

During his visit, the minister held detailed discussions with officials to assess the ongoing operations and issued directives for swift completion of procurement activities.

Acknowledging that the process is in its final phase, Minister Patra instructed officials to accelerate procurement from eligible farmers, ensuring no delays. Emphasising farmers' interests, he urged staff to continue working even on holidays.

BJP defers state chief poll over Puri tragedy



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 29: In view of the tragic incident in Puri that claimed three lives and injured several devotees, the Odisha unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Sunday postponed its organisational election for the state president and national executive members, originally scheduled for July 1, until further notice.

The announcement was made in the presence of BJP state general secretary Jatini Mohanty.

Announcing the decision, BJP returning officer for Odisha and Balasore MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi expressed deep sorrow over the incident. "The unfortunate stampede-like situation in Puri has shaken us all. The last rites of the deceased have not yet been performed, and many injured devotees are still undergoing

treatment. In such a moment of grief, continuing with the election process would be inappropriate," he said.

Sarangi added that all activities related to the ongoing organisational elections stand suspended with immediate effect. A fresh schedule will be announced in due course.

The party extended its heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

Earlier Sunday, the BJP had announced the schedule for the election of its state president and members (Rastriya Parishad) national executive members during a press conference at the party headquarter in the City.

Meanwhile, the process of internal elections for local committees, mandals, and district committees has already been completed.

Inter-state arms trafficker arrested

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 29: The Special Task Force (STF) of the Odisha Police Sunday arrested an interstate criminal involved in the illegal firearms trade and recovered arms, ammunition, and cash from his possession.

According to STF sources, based on intelligence input, a team of STF officers intercepted one Dillip Sah from Samastipur district in Bihar near the PWD Inspection Bungalow at Saradeipur, under the jurisdiction of Ballianta Police Station in Bhubaneswar Urban Police District.

During the search operation, STF officials recovered three country-made 7 mm automatic pistols with magazines, one 9 mm pistol with magazine, seven live rounds of country-made ammunition, a mobile phone, and some cash from Sah's possession. A case has been registered against the accused under Section 35(3) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) read with Sections 25 and 27 of the Arms Act.

The accused was arrested and produced before the SDJM Court in Bhubaneswar.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Bijaya Kumar Agrawala, S/o. Late Jaynarayan Agrawal, Resident of At/PO. - Ghens, P.S. - Melchhamunda, Dist. - Bargarh, Pin - 768034, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.-06, Dated 26.06.2025, that I shall be known as BIJAY KUMAR AGRAWAL for all future purposes.

I, Purnima Devi Agrawala, W/o - Bijay Kumar Agrawal, Resident of At/PO. - Ghens, P.S. - Melchhamunda, Dist. - Bargarh, Pin - 768034, Odisha declare by this affidavit No. - 815, Dated 26.06.2025, that I shall be known as PURNIMA DEVI AGRAWAL for all future purposes.

I, Rajesh Kumar Agrawala, DOB - DT. 21.06.1984, S/o. Bijay Kumar Agrawal, Resident of At/PO. - Ghens, P.S. - Melchhamunda, Dist. - Bargarh, Pin- 768034, Odisha declare by this affidavit No. - 658, Dated 28.05.2025, that I shall be known as RAJESH AGRAWAL, DOB - DT. 21.09.1984 for all future purposes.

Cultural fervour marks 2nd day of Odissi Utsav

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 29: The second day of Odissi Prativa Utsav 2025 began Sunday morning at Bhanjakala Mandap with the traditional lighting of the ceremonial lamp, setting a tone of spiritual sanctity and cultural reverence.

The event, organised in collaboration with Sanskritiki and Odissi International Association, featured odissi dancers from across the country and abroad. Around eighty dancers, including from USA, Kuwait, and Dubai



RUTVI TRIPATHY participated in this festival in three different groups and

were evaluated by eminent Odissi dancers and gurus.

"Guru Sabita Mishra, Trilochan Sahoo, Dushmant Kumar Swain, and Dibyashree Panda were among the jury members on the second day of the festival. Participants who secured above 75 per cent were awarded with Odissi Prativa Saman," said Odissi International Association founder Shyamahari Chakra.

Sanskritiki has been organising the International Odissi Festival for the past 16 years in City.

RPF busts 6-member criminal gang

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 29: In a major breakthrough under 'Operation "Yatri Suraksha"', the Detective Wing of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) arrested a six-member criminal gang from the Coaching Complex in Puri.

According to East Coast Railway (ECoR) sources, the gang was apprehended while allegedly planning to rob a night train operating between Puri and Khurda Road.

During the search operation,



the RPF recovered 23 stolen mobile phones, cash amounting to ₹24,450, and other incriminating materials. The total value of the recovered property is

estimated at ₹7,13,450.

Preliminary interrogation revealed that the accused were involved in multiple cases of mobile phone theft from passengers at railway stations and crowded passenger areas. They were also actively plotting robberies onboard trains.

The arrested individuals, along with the recovered items, were handed over to the Government Railway Police (GRP) in Puri. A formal case has been registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Heart disease rising among Odisha youth

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 29: Odisha is witnessing a worrying rise in heart-related ailments among its younger population, mirroring a nationwide trend that experts are calling a silent epidemic. According to state government data, heart attacks account for 282 deaths per lakh population, marking it as a leading cause of mortality in the region.

Heart disease, once considered a condition of the elderly, is increasingly striking India's youth — with fatal cases now reported in individuals as young as 17. Nationwide, heart-related ailments contribute to nearly 25 per cent of all deaths, with the Cardiology Society of India estimating around 3 million heart attacks annually.

Several high-profile deaths have brought the issue into focus — actor Siddhant-Suryavanshi, singer KK, comedian RajuSrivastava, and reality TV star SidharthShukla all died young due to cardiac

arrest. More recently, reports claimed that Shefali Jariwala, known for the song Kaanta Laga, also died of cardiac arrest.

Beyond the headlines, similar tragedies are unfolding across the country — people collapsing suddenly in gyms, markets, or even during wedding celebrations. Experts warn that changing lifestyles, poor diets, stress, and lack of awareness are major contributors to the alarming trend.

"Heart disease takes many forms — including congenital defects, coronary artery disease (causing heart attacks), valve disease, cardiomyopathy, and arrhythmias," explained SusantaPradhan, cardiologist at Utkal Institute of Medical Sciences and Hospital. "It's important to distinguish between heart attack and cardiac arrest. A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the heart muscle is blocked, while cardiac arrest happens when the heart suddenly stops pumping, which can result from a heart attack



or an arrhythmia," he said.

He added, "Warning signs like chest pain, sweating, dizziness, or lightheadedness should never be mistaken for gas or indigestion. Timely medical help can save lives. A balanced lifestyle — including moderate exercise, stress control, healthy eating, and regular check-ups — is our strongest defense."

Pratap Kumar Das, senior consultant at Capital Hospital and PGIMER, Bhubaneswar, emphasised the difference between the two conditions: "Heart attacks occur when blood flow to part of the heart muscle is blocked, often due

to hypertension, diabetes, or high cholesterol. The heart may continue beating, though sometimes irregularly. Cardiac arrest, however, is caused by an electrical malfunction that makes the heart stop completely — the person collapses, has no pulse or breathing, and loses consciousness."

Echoing the concerns, DibyaRanjanaBehera, consultant, Interventional Cardiologist at Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar, said, "Coronary Artery Disease is the most common and dangerous form of heart disease in adults. Alarming numbers of young people are affected due to smoking, poor lifestyle choices, stress, and unhealthy diets. Fast food will make you fast — towards disease."

Experts are urging young Indians to prioritise heart health. Behera warned, "Fatigue, breathlessness, chest pain, blackouts, palpitations — these are red flags. Don't wait for tragedy to strike before acting."

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	29.7°	28.0°	Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain.
Min Temp	23.4°	21.8°	
Humidity	93%	93%	
Rainfall	25.7mm	59.0mm	

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Similipal monsoon closure from July 1



PNN & AGENCIES

Baripada, June 29: Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) will be closed for tourists and visitors from July 1 because of monsoon, an official order said Sunday.

In a notification, STR Field Director and Regional Chief Wildlife Warden Prakash Chand Gogineni stated that the exact date for reopening of the national park would be announced later and published in newspapers.

However, the ecotourism complex at Jamuani, Gurgudia, Kumari, Barehipani and Ramtirtha will remain open for tourists, he said. Gogineni said in all 38,483 tourists, including 26,083 from Odisha, 12,388 from other states, and 12 foreign nationals, visited Similipal in 2024-2025, generating revenue of ₹4.26 crore.

While ₹1.22 crore was earned from jungle safaris, ₹2.75 crore was collected from nature camps inside the national park and ₹29 lakh from entry permits, he said. Each year, entry to Similipal is restricted during the monsoon season due to safety concerns. Heavy rainfall often washes away roads within the sanctuary, making travel hazardous. The temporary closure ensures tourist safety and allows time for necessary road repairs and infrastructure maintenance.

MAJOR RIVERS IN SPATE

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Balasore/Baripada, June 29: The state government Sunday placed the Balasore and Mayurbhanj district administrations on high alert with an impending flood threat looming over the northern part of the state as several major rivers in the region continue to swell, an official said.

Rivers such as Budhabalanga, Subarnarekha, Jalaka, Jambhira and Sona are witnessing rising water levels and may cause flooding by Monday, he warned.

Balasore Collector Suryawanshi Mayur Vikash has cancelled the leaves of all government employees. The fresh flood situation has panicked people as they are yet to recover from the scare of a flash flood in Subarnarekha which hit them June 20.

The Balasore district administration has already started evacuating the people in low-lying areas of Baliapal and Basta blocks with the support of ODRAF and fire and emergency services teams. All are advised to move to nearby shelters to prevent any type of mishaps during the flood, an official said.

This apart, the administration is also using a public address system to make people aware of the impending flood in the low-lying areas of Balasore, he said, adding that sandbags have been strategically deployed in large numbers to strengthen vulnerable riverbanks and prevent flooding.

Safety measures are in full swing to protect lives and prop-

Flood alert in Balasore, Mayurbhanj



Subarnarekha in spate at Baliapal

erty, he said. Torrential rainfall has disrupted normal life in Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts. Fishermen have been advised through public address systems not to venture into the sea as it remains rough after the new moon day.

According to another official, people of around nine villages under the Saraskana and Rasgovindpur blocks of Mayurbhanj have been evacuated to safe places and provided cooked food and relief.

The rise in water level has led to flood scare in low lying areas of Badasahi, Betanoti, Gopabandhu Nagar, Saraska-

na, Rasgovindpur and Morada blocks in Mayurbhanj district.

The Mayurbhanj district administration declared a holiday for all schools Monday. The Anganwadi centres will remain closed for three days in the district while the supplementary high school certificate examination will continue, the official said.

To oversee the situation on the ground in flood management, an engineer-in-chief and a chief engineer have been deployed in Balasore.

Water levels of Budhabalanga, Jalaka and Subarnarekha rivers were rising fast and have crossed the danger levels. The

water levels of all the rivers will rise further by midnight of Sunday, Central Water Commission sources said.

In this backdrop, peak flood is expected in Subarnarekha at 11.25 metres at midnight, in Budhabalanga at 8.20 metres at 9am Monday and in Jalaka at 6.82 metres at 6pm Sunday, another official said.

The State Flood Cell in the Department of Water Resources is working round-the-clock and the situation is being closely monitored, he said.

Meanwhile, a fresh low-pressure area has formed over the northwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining West Bengal and

Bangladesh coasts and northern Odisha is likely to receive heavy rainfall, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a bulletin Sunday.

Under the influence of the upper air cyclonic circulation over southwest Bangladesh and Gangetic West Bengal, another low-pressure area formed over northwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining West Bengal and Bangladesh coasts at 5.30am June 29, it said.

The system is likely to move slowly west-northwestwards across north Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal and Jharkhand during the next two days.

The IMD has forecast isolated heavy rainfall in the state from June 29 to July 4. Some places in the state may also witness very heavy rainfall till July 1, it said.

The low pressure is likely to trigger very heavy rains in parts of Odisha between Sunday and Tuesday. As the southwest monsoon is active over the state, heavy rainfall activity is expected to prevail next week, said Manorama Mohanty, the director of Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar.



People being brought to safety in Balasore



Jalaka overflows on a bridge in Basta



Waterlogged Morada block in Mayurbhanj

Woman dies in wall collapse

Morada: A 65-year-old woman died and another sustained critical injuries after a wall of their house collapsed on them following torrential rainfall at Sanamundabani village under this police limits in Mayurbhanj district, Saturday night. The deceased was identified as Inda Marandi, 65, while her sister-in-law Pana Tudu sleeping beside her sustained critical injuries. She was rescued in critical condition and admitted to the PRM Medical College and Hospital at Baripada where she succumbed during treatment Sunday. The injured woman is undergoing treatment.

Youth murdered in organised attack

Chhatrapur: A man was killed in an organised attack Saturday at Brahmaniapalli village under Chhatrapur police limits in Ganjam district. The deceased was identified as A Lachheya Patra, 32, a resident of Brahmaniapalli village. He hailed from Sasanapalli village under Purushottampur block but had been staying at his maternal grandfather's house at Brahmaniapalli since his childhood. According to reports, around seven to eight persons allegedly attacked Lachheya near a railway crossing close to the village Saturday over some reason. On being informed, his father, A Dilu Patra, rushed to the spot to rescue his son. He rescued Lachheya in a critical condition and rushed him to Chhatrapur hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment that night. Following the death, his father lodged a complaint at Chhatrapur police station. He reportedly named the accused in his complaint, stating he recognised them. Chhatrapur police registered a case (399/2025) and launched an investigation. The accused are currently absconding. The body has been handed over to the family members after a post-mortem.

Rath Yatra celebrated at Bangalore

Bhubaneswar: The auspicious Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath was celebrated with great devotion and grandeur at Sree Jagannath Temple, Agara, HSR Layout, Bangalore. The event witnessed a massive turnout of more than 30,000 devotees who gathered to seek the divine blessings of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra. The celebration began with all rituals and traditions performed meticulously and on time. The Pahandi Bije was conducted gracefully, capturing the essence of Odia tradition and emotional participation from the devotees. Academician and Trustee Sitikantha Sarangi performed the sacred duties of Chhera Pahanra. All trustees of the temple were present throughout the day and played key roles in ensuring the event's success. The smooth execution of the yatra was made possible due to the tremendous cooperation from all government departments, whose support in security, traffic control, sanitation, and crowd management was commendable.

Facelift for Muniguda rly station under ABSS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, June 29: Indian Railways has initiated the redevelopment of key railway stations in Odisha under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS). Among the major beneficiaries of this initiative is Muniguda Railway Station, which is undergoing a significant transformation to meet global standards of efficiency, sustainability and passenger comfort.

The redevelopment work at Muniguda Station is being undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs 20.16 crore. The project includes improvement of the station's facade, construction of a wide new foot overbridge, raising and resurfacing of platforms with modern shelters, and installation of coach indication boards and a signage. Other works

include provision of differently abled-friendly facilities, modern toilets with lift access, and a sewage treatment plant with an overhead tank and pipeline connections.

This transformation is also integrating eco-friendly solutions such as solar power systems, water conservation mechanisms and sustainable waste management practices. Redesigning circulating areas with better drop-off and pick-up zones, improved access roads and enhanced parking facilities are expected to streamline urban integration.

As part of its passenger-centric approach, the project will deliver high-speed Wi-Fi, digital information boards, upgraded sanitation facilities, improved food and beverage options and state-of-the-art security systems.

6-ft-long croc rescued from pond, released

Kendrapara: A six-foot long female saltwater crocodile which had strayed into a pond in a village in close proximity to Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district was rescued and released to the wild Sunday, an official said. The reptile had been roaming in Endalpur village for more than two weeks. The locals informed the forest officials, who later rescued it from the pond. "The forest officials managed to net and rope it after a two-hour-long exercise. Later it was released in the wild. The reptile did not cause any harm either to humans or domesticated animals," said Chittaranjan Beura, the forest range officer of the park. Crocodiles stray in search of food in village areas. They often leave the place for their original habitat within a few days as per their natural instinct, he said.

FROM CREMATORIUM TO COMMUNITY GARDEN

Malkangiri's 'scary' spot turns selfie haven



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, June 29: A crematorium once avoided by people out of fear is now drawing crowds armed with smartphones — not for funerals, but for selfies.

What used to be a grim and neglected cremation ground in Malkangiri town has undergone a remarkable transformation and now resembles a public park, rather than a place associated with death. Locals who once walked past the area with dread now step inside freely, admiring the gardens, colourful lighting, and a towering statue of Lord Shiva, and often



snapping selfies against the backdrop.

Cremation grounds traditionally evoke fear, especially at night. The fear of wandering spirits, eerie sounds, and unsettling silence keeps most people at bay. In this Malkangiri crematorium, the situation was no different. It was once

surrounded by filth, with most visitors choosing to remain outside the gates during funeral rites. But that image is now history.

The Malkangiri Municipality spent ₹1.30 crore to renovate the facility, turning it into what is now officially called an "Ideal Cremation Ground."

With manicured flower gardens, decorative pathways, and artistic installations surrounding the funeral area, the crematorium now offers a space of calm and even visual beauty. At the entrance stands a 15-foot-tall statue of Lord Shiva with a Shivaling just ahead. A shed has been

constructed for visitors to rest under, and by nightfall, the entire site glows with vibrant lighting, further reducing the eerie atmosphere once associated with the place.

"This was my dream project," said Manoj Kumar Barik, chairperson of the Malkangiri Municipality. "The old crematorium was in a dilapidated state. I wanted to create a space that not only served its purpose with dignity but also didn't evoke fear. We've succeeded in doing that."

Barik added that the transformation isn't stopping here. The municipality is also working on rejuvenating the nearby Balisagar pond, aiming to develop its surroundings into a full-fledged park in the coming days.

Nowadays, people visit the crematorium not just to pay their final respects to loved ones — they come to walk, sit, reflect, and even take selfies at what is now one of the cleanest, most serene spots in Malkangiri town.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
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Appointment of Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Odisha
Applications are invited for the post of
Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Odisha.

The Vice-Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

- A person possessing the highest level of competence, integrity, morals and institutional commitment.
- A distinguished academician, with a minimum of 10 years' experience as Professor in a University or 10 years' experience in reputed research and/or academic administrative organization with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership.
- Preferably not more than 65 years of age as on the closing date of receipt of applications of this advertisement.

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- The terms and conditions of the services will be those as set forth in the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the University.

Procedure for appointment

- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a committee constituted under the provisions of Act of the University.
- The advertisement is available on the websites <http://www.education.gov.in> and <https://cuo.ac.in>
- Candidates are required to **"APPLY ONLINE ONLY"** on the Ministry of Education SAMARTH portal as per the link given below:
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- The above link will be active from **30.06.2025, 10:00 Hours to 29.07.2025, 17:00 Hours.**

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E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES "APPENDIX - IV - A [See Proviso to Rule 8 (6) & 9 (1)]"
E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) & 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s), Mortgagor(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable properties Mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, POSSESSION of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" AND "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis for recovery of dues in below mentioned accounts. The details of Borrower(s) / Mortgagor(s)/ Guarantor(s)/Secured Asset(s)/Dues/Reserve Price/ e-Auction Date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Name & Address of Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Description of the immovable property with known encumbrances, if any	Outstanding Dues	Date & Time of E-auction	Reserve Price		Status of Possession (Symbolic / Physical)	Property Inspection Date & Time
					EMD	Bid Increase Amount		
1.	Borrower: Mr. Suvendu Kumar Biswal / Guarantor: Mr. Subrat Kumar Biswal, S/o: Bhagabata Biswal, Both are residing At: Kuansha Kara Sahi, PO: Bhadrak Town, Bhadrak - 756100 Dist.: Bhadrak in the name of Suvendu Kumar Biswal & Subrat Kumar Biswal	Equitable mortgage of Land & Building situated at Khata No.: 348 & 349, Plot No.: 1429, Area: Ac. 0.050 Dec. & 1431/2434, Area: 0.010 Dec., Total Area: Ac. 0.060 Dec., Mouza: Kuansha, PS: Bhadrak Town,	₹9,22,587/- as per demand notice + (unapplied interest and other charges as applicable) and contractual dues as on 26.06.2025 is ₹25,18,644.97 + costs and expenses	15.07.2025 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm	₹ 24,80,000/- / ₹ 2,48,000/- / ₹ 10,000/-	11.07.2025 (within working hours 10.00 AM to 04.00PM)	** Symbolic	

** a. Property is in symbolic possession and Bidder is purchasing the property in symbolic possession at his/own risk & responsibility.
b. Bank will not be responsible or duty bound for handing over of physical possession.
c. Bank will handover the possession of property symbolically only and successful auction bidder/purchaser will not claim physical possession from the Bank.

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.htm> and <https://baanknet.in>. Also, prospective bidders may contact the Authorized Officer on Tel No.: 0671-2361377, Mob.: 707727133

Also Please Note:

- The Authorized Officer/Bank has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/cancel the sale/ modify any terms and conditions of the sale without any prior notice and without assigning any reason including calling upon the next highest bidder to perform in case the earlier bidder fails to perform.
- All statutory dues/arrears of property tax, electricity dues, other dues if any including registration charges, stamp duty, taxes etc shall have to be borne by the purchaser. Authorised Officer shall not be responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrance, etc. or any other dues to the Government, Local Authority or anybody, in respect of the properties under sale. Bank does not undertake any responsibility to procure any permission/NOC/license in respect of property under sale.

Last Date of Submission of online payment of EMD : 15.07.2025 latest by 5.00 P.M.

STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE TO THE BORROWERS/ GUARANTORS/ MORTGAGORS FOR SUBSEQUENT SALE UNDER RULE 8(5), 8(6) & 9(1) AS PER AMENDED SARFAESI ACT 2002

Place: Cuttack, Date:26.06.2025 Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

Scan here for more details

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

THE NEW INDIAN ORDER



It seems India's foreign policy is adrift in the high seas in an increasingly transactional global disorder

It is not quite clear whether the disclosures of CDS Gen Anil Chauhan on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore to the international media on 31 May or its later reiterations at a lecture in Pune regarding attrition levels of India in the 4-day conflict with Pakistan were a gaffe or a strategic leak. Like many things which remained obscure or loudly proclaimed by the media giving a perception advantage to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, this also shall remain a puzzle.

The government's snap decision of sending out 7 multi-party delegations to over 30 destinations in all directions except for its own neighbourhood, to sensitize foreign governments of the menace of terrorism emanating from Pakistan failed to have the desired impact mainly because terrorism is a global issue and every country's terrorism has to be tackled through counter-terrorism by the concerned state. Pakistan, being a non-permanent member of the UNSC on the other hand got to manipulate the resolution moved against terrorism deleting mention of the Resistance Force (an offshoot of the banned LeT) which perpetrated the killings in Pahalagam, and instead bagged two prize assignments, Chair of the Taliban Sanctions Committee and vice Chair of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Meanwhile, the efforts which India made to 'internationalize' Operation Sindoor and build a credible victim image for India have been overshadowed by the 12-day war between Israel and Iran, both strategic and friendly partners of India. The war, which saw both sides severely damaged, came to an abrupt halt with the US call for ceasefire on 21 June (allegedly at Israel's instance and brokered by the Emir of Qatar) following a massive missile attack by Iran on the largest US airbase in Al-Hadeid, Qatar. Trump's calling for a ceasefire 48 hours after a massive aerial bombardment of Iran's nuclear sites, ostensibly to disable Iran's vaunted nuclearization process on Fordow, and submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles on Natanz and Isfahan, came after a UN Security Council special resolution the following day moved by Pakistan along with China and Russia, and anticipating more Iranian attacks on US bases and personnel in the Gulf along with purported closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Furthermore, Trump's MGA persona having forsaken the principle of no entry into "forever wars" may have outweighed the US President's thinking of solidly backing Israel in its unilateral assertion of supremacy by launching the war on 13 June against Iran to defang its nuclear capability, go for regime change and install a West-supported puppet government. The following day Trump was leaving for a NATO Summit in The Hague (where Russia's continuing operations in Ukraine and NATO's consistent support for Ukraine would dominate the discussions) and therefore had to maintain a façade of equanimity and strategic

abstinence from wars in another region, crucial to the Arab Gulf states and the world in general.

The ceasefire was expectedly fragile with attacks continuing from both sides until Trump had to reprimand Israel to stop its attacks on Iran. In the whole game, India was noticeably quiet except voicing its support for the ceasefire and talking the language of dialogue and diplomacy. It seemed in preserving its strategic autonomy, morphed into strategic silence, India had decided to be everywhere but not consequential anywhere. Silence is not a strategy nor deterrence; it is deemed pusillanimity.

India's attendance at the SCO meetings at the NSA, Defence Minister and Summit levels in China when it had distanced from the SCO statement condemning Israel after its unprovoked aggression seemed contradictory. Difficult indeed to gauge which side India belongs to, G7/ Quad belonging to the Global North or SCO/ BRICS, belonging to the Global South where China and Russia are clearly gaining strategic advantage over India. The coming meetings of Quad which EAM Jaishankar is attending and the forthcoming BRICS Summit in Brazil will be an acid test for India to judge its diplomacy in the face of Pakistan's rising popularity and support of America.

It seems India's foreign policy is adrift in the high seas in an increasingly transactional global disorder. What India needs to stand by are not only peace and humanity but justice and fairness as well. Only then can our nation chart a course, resolute and farsighted, which is the abject need of the hour.

The writer is a retired diplomat. Views expressed are personal.



Malay Mishra

WHAT INDIA NEEDS TO STAND BY ARE NOT ONLY PEACE AND HUMANITY BUT JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS AS WELL

In hindsight it is not difficult to see why India was bereft of friends (with the singular exception of Israel) to support its efforts in its fight against terrorism, and why consequently international financial bodies - World Bank, IMF, ADB - instead of withholding funds were instead releasing them against India's plea that these would largely go towards funding further terrorist activities of Pakistan. India's ideological

Timidity is a form of vanity. When you are timid, it means that you attach more importance to the opinions others have of you than to the sincerity of your actions.



THE MOTHER

Proof To Vote

Months ahead of the Assembly polls in Bihar, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on 28 June launched a 'special intensive revision' of electoral rolls in the state, a move that critics argue undermines the core principles of democracy, especially, universal adult franchise as guaranteed in India. This initiative requires nearly 2.93 crore voters to provide documentary proof of their birth and parental origins. Likening the exercise to a covert implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Opposition parties have warned that this extensive and complex verification process could potentially lead to mass disenfranchisement.

Bihar has approximately 7.89 crore voters, of whom 4.96 crore are already on the electoral rolls as of 2003. For these voters, the process is straightforward: they only need to verify their names and submit a form. However, for the remaining 2.93 crore individuals, the procedure is far from simple. The exercise requires that any voter whose name was not included in the electoral rolls during the last revision in 2003 must now provide valid proof of their own birth details, as well as those of their parents, including their place of origin. This revision places the entire burden of proof on the individual voter, marking a significant departure from previous practices. Placing the onus of eligibility on the voter, without providing access to necessary documents, legal support, or information, transforms a fundamental right into a challenging obstacle course. Under the exercise, voters born before 1 July, 1987 are required to present documents that verify their date and place of birth. Those born between 1 July, 1987, and 2 December, 2004 must provide similar documentation, along with proof of identity for one parent. And, for individuals born after 2 December, 2004, documentation for both parents is necessary. In a nation where official records can be difficult to access or may be incomplete—especially for rural, low-income, and migrant communities—these requirements could deprive many of their voting rights.

Calling the exercise a Constitutional obligation, the ECI has said it is carrying out the intensive review of electoral rolls to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth and ensure that only Indian nationals are included. The move, which would be later expanded to other states like Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal where elections are scheduled in 2026, assumes significance in the wake of a crackdown in various states on illegal foreign migrants, especially those from Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Opposition parties have charged the ruling BJP and the ECI with trying to manipulate electoral results under the guise of administrative efficiency. They condemned this initiative as a Nazi-like effort to trace ancestry and infringe on people's democratic rights. Voicing its concern over the voter list revision, the Congress has cautioned against "deliberate exclusion" of people belonging to Muslim and Dalit communities from the voter list through misuse of government machinery.

Nevertheless, the ECI, which of late is being perceived by some as being subservient to the government in power, has to come out clean on this exercise. Otherwise, erosion of people's faith in a Constitutional body could spell doom for India's democracy.

WISDOM CORNER

There are three methods to gaining wisdom. The first is reflection, which is the highest. The second is limitation, which is the easiest. The third is experience, which is the bitterest.

CONFUCIUS

The discovery of truth is prevented more effectively, not by the false appearance things present and which mislead into error, not directly by weakness of the reasoning powers, but by preconceived opinion, by prejudice.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

On the mountains of truth you can never climb in vain: either you will reach a point higher up today, or you will be training your powers so that you will be able to climb higher tomorrow.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1905: Albert Einstein submits a paper outlining his theory of special relativity. The text "Zur Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper" comprises the currently accepted theory about the relationship between space and time. The theory of special relativity is the basis for his theory of general relativity, which he published in 1916.

1908: An enormous aerial explosion, presumably caused by a comet fragment colliding with Earth, flattened approximately 2,000 square km (500,000 acres) of pine forest near the Podkamennaya Tunguska River in central Siberia.

1934: Night of the Long Knives. On this date in 1934 occurred the "Night of the Long Knives," in which German dictator Adolf Hitler had his elite SS guards summarily execute many leading officials of the SA, a Nazi paramilitary group.

1936: American author Margaret Mitchell published Gone with the Wind, a sweeping romance set during the Civil War; the novel later won a Pulitzer Prize and was adapted into a hugely successful film.

1960: Zaire, formerly Belgian Congo and now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, declared its independence from Belgium.

1971: The crew of Soviet spacecraft "Soyuz 11" dies after the loss of air supply. The cause of the tragedy was a faulty valve. The three cosmonauts had previously achieved the first docking of a spacecraft to a space station in history.

LOL

THE LONELY CHILD

Sandy began a job as an elementary school counselor and she was eager to help. One day during recess she noticed a girl standing by herself on one side of a playing field while the rest of the kids enjoyed a game of soccer at the other. Sandy approached and asked if she was all right. The girl said she was. A little while later, however, Sandy noticed the girl was in the same



spot, still by herself. Approaching again, Sandy offered, "Would you like me to be your friend?" The girl hesitated, then said, "Okay," looking at the woman suspiciously. Feeling she was making progress, Sandy then asked, "Why are you standing here all alone?" "Because," the little girl said with great exasperation, "I'm the goalie!"

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Middle-East model for land restoration

At a time when political instability dominates the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, climate change, floods, and fires tend to get less attention than usual. And the problems of desertification and droughts almost become forgotten. But this neglect is not only unjustified, it is dangerous. While desertification and droughts are slow-moving and less dramatic than wars, floods, and fires, they are just as devastating. Just ask the more than 500 million people living in the MENA region who must cope with them each day.

Whereas healthy land produces food, retains water, absorbs carbon, and supports livelihoods, degraded land does not. And from the Atlas Mountains to the Tigris-Euphrates river valley, the MENA region features some of the driest - and most rapidly degrading - landscapes on Earth. With temperatures in the region rising nearly twice as fast as the global average, water scarcity, extreme heatwaves, and desertification are increasingly shaping everyday life. Add to that some of the world's fastest-growing populations, and the risks to food security, economic stability, and social cohesion will only grow.

MENA's experiences are an ominous portent of what awaits other regions, which will soon find themselves facing many of the same challenges. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the frequency and duration of droughts have increased globally by nearly 30% since 2000. More than 3.2 billion people worldwide are now affected by land degradation, with 12 million hectares of arable land lost each year.

But the MENA region also offers reason for hope. For example, Saudi Arabia has been investing heavily in mitigating and, where possible, reversing the effects of climate change, including through land rehabilitation, rangeland restoration, reforestation, and climate adaptation.

The Kingdom's ambition is exemplified by the Saudi Green Initiative, which includes pledges to plant ten billion trees and rehabilitate 40 million hectares of degraded land. Innovation is central to this effort. One novel land-restoration technique, developed through a collaboration between Saudi technical institutions and the FAO, uses dry palm leaves to stabilize sand dunes in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. This organic ma-

terial, which was historically considered waste, protects topsoil from wind erosion and slows the rate at which water evaporates, thereby ensuring enough moisture for dormant native seeds to germinate.

The FAO is also working with Saudi Arabia to implement science-based land-monitoring systems, scale up sustainable land-management techniques, and train national experts in climate-smart practices. More than 40 professionals have been trained across key regions, including Al-Jouf, Riyadh, and the Eastern Province. While solutions are always adapted to the local ecosystem, they are designed with scalability in mind.

But climate change is not bound by national borders. That is why Saudi Arabia created the Middle East Green Initiative, which aims to strengthen regional cooperation. At the global level, the Kingdom is spearheading the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, aimed at helping the most vulnerable countries cope with drought.

Since the initiative's announcement at the 2024 UN Convention to Combat Desertification (COP16), more than \$3 billion has been mobilized. It helps that, beyond being cru-

cial to human well-being, land restoration is a high-return investment: the FAO estimates that every dollar invested in it can yield up to \$30 in economic and environmental returns.

Local NGOs and communities are playing a growing role in land-restoration efforts, such as by establishing nurseries for native plants, building green belts, and raising public awareness about land restoration. This combination of local action, national direction, and international cooperation delivers the kind of robust, lasting results that are needed to build true climate resilience. And it should serve as a model for the rest of the world.

The climate crisis is advancing fast, but so are solutions - thanks not least to those on the frontline. The most climate-vulnerable countries are acting as role models, innovators, pioneers, and leaders. What Saudi Arabia is doing today will shape what California, southern Europe, and the Sahel do tomorrow. Fortunately, the lessons are likely to be as plentiful as they are constructive.

The writer is Program Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Saudi Arabia.

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Nizar Haddad

MORE THAN 3.2 BILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE ARE NOW AFFECTED BY LAND DEGRADATION, WITH 12 MILLION HECTARES OF ARABLE LAND LOST EACH YEAR

Conservation loopholes

Sir, This refers to "Act of revenge: 3 held for poisoning tigress, four cubs," Orissa POST, June 29. The shocking poisoning of a tigress and her four cubs in the Male Mahadeshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka, allegedly by a cattle owner avenging livestock loss, is a chilling indictment of India's failing grassroots conservation mechanisms. Also, another tigress was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Bandipur Tiger Reserve. These twin tragedies pierce the heart of Karnataka's tiger protection legacy and reveal deep cracks in surveillance, intelligence, and community engagement around protected zones. Poisoning is not an accident—it's a brutal, deliberate act, often driven by retaliation or covert poaching networks. Such violence doesn't just extinguish endangered lives; it unravels entire ecosystems. That two such incidents occurred in succession demands an urgent review of forest vigilance, compensation policies for locals, and enforcement rigor. India harbors over 70% of the global tiger population. Each tiger lost to human cruelty is a blow to that global responsibility. Authorities must act swiftly and prosecute the culprits with the full weight of the Wildlife Protection Act. Conservation cannot afford ambiguity or leniency.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Right-angle not right

Sir, Bhopal is 'fortunate' to have a structure (an ROB) that has become as talked about as Italy's Leaning Tower of Pisa. This is because of the fact that this ROB has one major 90-degree turn, which is a sure-shot recipe for accidents, particularly at night. Ask any student of geometry and he will tell you that 90 degrees means a right-angle. Only in this case, the right-angle is just not right, as it is obviously a design flaw which, if allowed to remain, may even cost human lives. The least that the ruling BJP dispensation of the state can do is to tender an apology to the people for wasting taxpayers' money and also to put up prominent signages at both the starting points of the bridge, warning people of the "Bend it like Beckham" curve that lies ahead.

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS

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



KERALA HOSPITAL ROW

Equipment shortage sparks probe

Haris Chirakkal, head of the Urology Department, had highlighted the issue in a strongly worded Facebook post, which he later deleted. However, speaking to reporters Sunday, he maintained that his concerns were valid



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, June 29: A senior government doctor's disclosure regarding a shortage of surgical equipment and delays in surgeries at the state-run Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital has triggered a controversy in Kerala, prompting the Health Department to order an inquiry.

Haris Chirakkal, head of the Urology Department, had highlighted the issue in a strongly worded Facebook post, which he later deleted. However, speaking to reporters Sunday, he maintained that his concerns were valid.

"What I said was the truth. I won't hide after speaking the truth. There are no political motives behind my disclosure," he said. Chirakkal said he had repeatedly raised the matter with senior officials, including the medical college principal and hospital superintendent, but no action was taken.

Although he does not have direct access to Health Minister Veena George, he said he had informed the minister's office about the difficulties faced by his department and the hospital in general. "There are

issues across all departments, but no one speaks up out of fear. Many times, surgeries were carried out only after patients purchased the necessary equipment themselves," he said.

He added that he was frustrated with repeatedly approaching voluntary organisations and medical companies for equipment due to the persistent shortage. This, he said, compelled him to expose the system's failure.

Chirakkal also expressed concern that he might face a vigilance probe, as he had gone beyond official procedures to procure equipment to prevent delays in surgeries.

"I don't fear any investigation. Many of my colleagues have moved to the private sector. But I studied in a government medical college and wanted to serve in the public sector—that's why I continue here," he added.

Meanwhile, addressing the media Sunday, Health Minister Veena George refrained from criticising Dr Chirakkal and described him as a hardworking and trustworthy medical professional.

George cautioned against using the matter to malign the entire healthcare sys-

tem in the state. Acknowledging procedural delays in procuring medical equipment for government hospitals and medical colleges, she said such rules should be relaxed if necessary. The minister also praised Chirakkal's commitment to patient welfare and his willingness to speak up.

Highlighting the importance of government medical colleges, she pointed out that while 2.5 lakh patients availed free treatment in 2021, that number has now risen to 6.5 lakh.

George had earlier announced a comprehensive probe into Dr Chirakkal's revelations.

Meanwhile, the opposition UDF strongly criticised the Health Department over the doctor's disclosures and announced plans to appoint a commission to study issues in the health sector and organise a conclave. A report based on the findings would be submitted to the government.

Speaking to reporters in Paravur, Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan said Dr Chirakkal's statements echoed what the UDF had been highlighting for years.

"The real state of Kerala's healthcare system is far from the rosy picture being painted by the authorities using PR agencies," he alleged.

"This is the situation in all government medical colleges. Some don't even have basic supplies like surgical thread to stitch wounds. Patients are forced to buy their equipment, and many surgeries have been cancelled," he claimed.

Maha temple to bar devotees in Western, revealing attire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane, June 29: The trust managing the Ekvira Aai Temple at Lonavala in Maharashtra will enforce a dress code for devotees from July 7, banning Western attire and revealing clothing.

As per a release from the office of MP Suresh Mhatre, who is the chief trustee of the Karla Ekvira Aai Trust, a resolution was passed regarding the dress code during a meeting of the temple's board of trustees Friday. The Ekvira Aai Temple near the Karla Caves in Lonav-

ALACCORDING TO THE RELEASE, FEMALE DEVOTEES CAN WEAR SAREES, SALWAR-KURTAS AND OTHER TRADITIONAL INDIAN CLOTHING, WHILE MEN CAN WEAR DHOTI, KURTA-PYJAMA, PANTS AND SHIRTS, T-SHIRTS AND OTHER TRADITIONAL CLOTHING

SEVERAL TEMPLES IN MAHARASHTRA HAVE IMPOSED DRESS CODES FOR VISITORS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS

ala sees a heavy footfall of devotees and tourists.

"Ekvira Aai Temple in Karla is a place of devotion for lakhs of people, especially

from the Agri and Koli communities. However, the sanctity of the temple is being compromised by devotees arriving in revealing and inappropriate clothes," the release quoted Mhatre as saying.

He said the board of trustees has taken a unanimous decision to implement a dress code to address this issue, which will come into effect from July 7.

The new rules explicitly prohibit shorts, mini skirts, Western attires and revealing clothing, and ripped jeans, the release said. Such clothing is

considered disrespectful in the religious environment of the temple, and banning it is necessary to maintain the dignity and traditional values associated with the worship of Ekvira Aai, it stated.

According to the release, female devotees can wear sarees, salwar-kurtas and other traditional Indian clothing while men can wear dhoti kurta-pyjama, pants and shirts, t-shirts and other traditional clothing. Several temples in Maharashtra have imposed dress codes for visitors over the past few years.



People take part in the 'palkhi', palanquin, of Gajanan Maharaj of Shegaon, in Solapur, Maharashtra

PTI PHOTO

Health & Education depts to launch rabies awareness in govt schools of Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, June 29: The Kerala Health and Education departments are together organising an awareness programme against rabies in government and aided schools in the state from June 30.

State Health Minister Veena George Saturday said that as part of the programme, a class led by health workers will be organised during the Assembly time in all government and aided schools in the state June 30 to create awareness among school children against rabies.

For this, the Education Department has issued a special directive that doctors or health workers from local health centers, hospitals, urban health centers, etc. have to participate in the Assembly class in the schools, a statement issued by the minister's office said.

The minister clarified that a

district-level programme will also be organised in a major school in each of the districts in the presence of the Collector, public representatives, and district-level officials of the health and education departments.

George said that as children were more likely to get infected quickly if they get bitten, students and teachers will be made aware about the first aid to be provided, vaccination and precautions to be taken when coming in contact with animals.

Subsequently, similar awareness classes will be organised for teachers and parents of all schools in the month of July through PTA meetings, she said.

Besides that, pamphlets, videos, and posters containing guidelines for children will be prepared and distributed, she said, adding that such measures will help in raising awareness among children and through them, those at home.

RTOs rise in Maha amid staff crunch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 29: The Maharashtra government's decision to start 10 new Deputy Regional Transport Offices in the past two years has come in for criticism from some quarters over the need and timing of the expansion, especially at a time when 77 per cent of services are available online.

They also cited a Government Resolution, issued June 18, 2018, which explicitly states that no new RTO office should be established unless a district is bifurcated.

The GR had specified that vehicle testing centres or camp offices could be set up instead of creating new RTOs in larger districts.

Before this GR, the state's RTOs and Deputy RTOs stood at 50, with the last one coming up in 2011 in Karad, the home turf of then chief minister Prithviraj Chavan.

From May 2023, the state has seen deputy RTOs being set up at Ichalkaranji (MH 51), Chalisgaon (MH 52), Phaltan (MH 53), Bhadgaon (MH 54), Udgir (MH 55), Khamgaon (MH 56), Vai-



japur (MH 57), Mira Bhayandar (MH 58), Jat (MH 59) and Palghar (MH 60).

The state now has 24 RTOs and 36 Deputy RTOs. Defending the move, Transport Commissioner Vivek Bhimanwar told PTI that GRs serve as broad guidelines and asserted all changes are made with the approval of the Chief Minister. He, however, accepted new offices were created despite a manpower shortage.

The latest deputy RTO

was set up in May this year in Palghar, which also has jurisdiction over the booming Mira-Bhayander area.

Transport minister Pratap Sarnaik's assembly seat is part of the region. The number of RTOs in Thane region, a stronghold of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, now stands at four, while most others have such facilities in the range of two to three.

When contacted, minister Sarnaik said the decision is

based on growing urban population and inconvenience faced by rural citizens, adding that the threshold being used for the purpose is a population of seven lakh.

While RTOs are coming up in small towns like Chalisgaon and Bhadgaon, barely 25 kilometres apart, densely populated areas like Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad are getting left out, an official said on condition of anonymity while asserting these are "politically driven decisions".

Despite a manpower crunch and need for infrastructure like test grounds, these offices are coming up to "please local elected representatives" at high costs, a retired official claimed.

Critics also cited that 89 of 115 RTO services, or 77 per cent, have been made available online, including 58 that are completely faceless, which should have actually reduced the need for physical facilities. Moreover, many services are also being outsourced, and a large-scale physical expansion may contradict the push for e-governance, they added.

Oppn boycotts high tea event on eve of Monsoon Session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 29: The Opposition parties in Maharashtra Sunday announced a boycott of the traditional high tea event of the state government on the eve of the legislature's Monsoon Session citing rampant corruption, unpopular policies and misuse of funds.

Confirming the development, Leader of Opposition in the legislative council Ambadas Danve of the Shiv Sena (UBT) said the boycott is a mark of protest against a "dishonest government".

"From the forced implementation of the Shaktipeeth Expressway to the failure to provide buses to MSRTC, non-payment of dues to private contractors, and injustice in the Vaishali Hagawane (dowry harassment-suicide) case in Pune, this government has lost the moral right to seek cooperation. Why should we meet the government that is imposing a third language (Hindi) on Standard I," he said.

His colleague and former minister Aaditya Thackeray attacked the Mahayuti government of Devendra Fadnavis for corruption in school admissions.

"The first list for 11th standard admissions appears to be tainted with corruption. There is reason to believe that school education minister Dada Bhuse may be involved," he alleged.

Thackeray also slammed the state government for "tacitly backing" the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), which he claimed was imposing "unjust" fines to the tune of Rs 12.50 crore on motorists using the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.

The driver of Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena Lok Sabha MP Sandipan Bhumre has received a huge parcel of land from the descendants of the erstwhile royal Salar Jung family of Hyderabad, which raises suspicion of irregular land deals, Thackeray further alleged.

Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Vijay Wadettiwar pointed out to former BJP minister Babanrao Lonikar's objectionable statements at a gathering.

Mullaperiyar Dam shutters opened

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Idukki (Kerala), June 29: Authorities opened 13 shutters of the Mullaperiyar Dam Sunday, releasing water into the Periyar River as the water level neared full capacity.

Each shutter was raised by 10 centimetres, and around 250 cusecs of water per second is now flowing out, according to information provided by the Tamil Nadu Water Resources Department to the Kerala authorities.

The shutters were opened at 11.35 am after the water level in the 128-year-old dam crossed 136 feet. The water level rose due to the heavy rainfall in the dam's catchment areas over the past few days.

The move follows days of preparation by the Idukki district administration after Tamil Nadu, which operates the dam, indicated it might open the gates once the water level reached 136 feet.

Kerala govt defends Zumba in schools, dismisses criticism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, June 29: Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty Sunday firmly defended the state's decision to introduce Zumba in schools, dismissing criticism from some Muslim religious organisations and warning against giving a communal colour to educational activities.

"Zumba is a nationally recognised sport, with lakhs participating across the country," Sivankutty told reporters. Referring to the criticism from certain religious groups against the programme, the Minister alleged that all those who participate in the sport have been insulted by the derogatory remarks made.

"Those who made such comments should withdraw them and offer a public apology," Sivankutty said.

The Minister was responding to questions by the media amid growing protests from certain



religious groups who oppose the inclusion of Zumba in the school curriculum.

The programme, introduced as part of an anti-drug awareness campaign, has drawn both support and criticism from across the political spectrum.

Sivankutty made the Left government's position on the matter clear by attending a Zumba performance held in front of the state secretariat on Sunday, organised by support-

ers of the programme.

His presence sent a strong message that the government would not reverse its decision. "All decisions regarding academic and non-academic activities in schools are made by the elected government. No one else is authorised to issue such orders," he said.

He, however, said if there are concerns, the government is open to discussions. "The government is ready for dis-

The programme, introduced as part of an anti-drug awareness campaign, has drawn both support and criticism from across the political spectrum

cussion if there are any doubts regarding the decisions it has taken. However, giving a communal colour to matters that are clearly understood by all and making such statements is against the secularism of the country—that cannot be accepted," he said.

Sivankutty also addressed broader issues like the recent uproar over gender-neutral uniforms and co-ed play, calling them overblown.

"The PTA decides school uniforms—not outside forces," he noted, adding that recognised



Despite repeated correspondence in this regard by the university and the district administration, the result of insensitivity and negligence at the level of the Social Welfare Department in Lucknow

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

RAILY LINK TO PARTS OF NORTHEAST PARTIALLY RESTORED AFTER SIX DAYS

The railway link to Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram and southern Assam was partially restored Sunday, six days after it was snapped due to landslides in the Lumding-Badarpur hill section of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), officials said



of the day quote

We had left a perfectly fine Delhi. But these people have ruined it. There are long power cuts, school fees have been hiked, and their ministers and MLAs are busy looting Delhi



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | FORMER DELHI CM

Considering that the fishing season has just begun, I urge the Ministry to initiate proactive diplomatic engagement with the Sri Lankan authorities to ensure restraint and mutual understanding in the handling of fishing-related issues



MK STALIN | TN CM

I would also ask my Muslim brethren in Bihar to remember that the NDA government is on its way out. In November, a new pro-poor government will be installed in the state and it will consign the Waqf Act to the dustbin



TEJASHWI YADAV | RID LEADER

Monsoon covers entire country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Shimla/Uttarakashi, Jun 29: A cloudburst in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district early Sunday left two construction workers dead and seven missing as monsoon covered the entire country almost a week earlier than usual, bringing rain in the national capital and other northern states, triggering landslides in several hilly areas and sending rivers into spate.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for heavy rainfall June 29 and 30 in various districts of Uttarakhand, including Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri, Haridwar and Nainital. Authorities have put the Chardham yatra on hold for a day for the safety of pilgrims.

The Shimla Meteorological Centre has also issued a red alert for very heavy downpour in 10 districts of Himachal Pradesh, where the death toll from rain-related incidents climbed to 20 since the onset of monsoon in the state June 20.

In Uttarakhand, a landslide triggered by a cloudburst destroyed the shelters of workers engaged in the construction of a hotel along the Yamunotri National Highway in Uttarkashi district, officials said.

There were 29 labourers at the campsite when the landslide occurred washing away around 10 metres of the highway. Twenty of them were evacuated to safety while nine went missing, the district emergency operation centre said.

Bodies of two missing labourers were recovered from the banks of the Yamuna River near Tiladi Shaheed Smarak, about 18 km from the place where the landslide occurred, police said. The labourers are said to be of Nepalese origin.

NDRF, SDRF and police personnel are carrying out search and rescue operations



Swollen Beas river following heavy monsoon rainfall in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

at the site, District Magistrate Prashant Arya said.

The highway was blocked by landslide debris, he said, adding pilgrims returning from Yamunotri have been asked to stay at safe locations due to the blocked highway, he said.

The Chardham Yatra has been postponed for a day as a precautionary step and a decision on further travel will be taken after reviewing the weather conditions along the routes Monday, Garhwal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey said.

In Himachal Pradesh, three more deaths were reported in rain-related incidents since Saturday. One person each drowned in Una and Bilaspur districts while a person died after falling from a height in the Shimla district, according to the state emergency operation centre.

Services on the Shimla-Kalka rail line -- a UNESCO world heritage -- were suspended Sunday after boulders and trees fell on the tracks following overnight rains in Solan district. A bridge in Solan's Barotiwala industrial area was also washed away.

A landslide near Koti on the Shimla-Kalka National Highway (NH-5), connecting Shimla and Chandigarh, damaged

some stretches of the road, resulting in a two to three-km-long traffic jam for hours.

All five spillway gates of Pandoh Dam were opened Sunday morning, resulting in an increase in water level in Beas River. According to IMD data, this is the earliest the monsoon has covered the entire country since 2020, when it did so by June 26.

The monsoon arrived in Delhi two days after the normal date of June 27, the IMD said. According to the Met department, Chandigarh received 119.5 mm of rain in the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 am Sunday. Among other places in Punjab, rains lashed Ferozepur, Mohali, Ludhiana, Patiala, Pathankot and Rupnagar.

The IMD said that heavy to very heavy rain is likely to continue in many parts of northwest, central, east and northeast India over the next seven days.

The IMD Sunday issued a 'red' alert, predicting extremely heavy rainfall in parts of Jharkhand till July 1, an official said.

Jharkhand's capital Ranchi, which has been experiencing light to moderate rainfall since Sunday morning, is likely to receive heavy rainfall till the morning of July 2, the IMD

TMC acts against MLA over student gangrape remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, June 29: The Trinamool Congress Sunday show caused party MLA Madan Mitra stating that his comments over the alleged gangrape of a law student in her college were uncalled for and insensitive.

In a letter to Mitra, who is the former minister, TMC state president Subrata Bakshi show caused him for breaking party rules and to reply within three days.

"Your (Mitra) uncalled for and insensitive comments June 28 has affected our party's image," the show cause letter issued by Bakshi said. It also said that Mitra's comments were against the party's stand on the matter.

Bakshi said that the party's highest leadership has in the strongest terms condemned the shameful incident and that the administration was taking all necessary steps. It noted that the accused persons were quickly identified and arrested by police.

Mitra had Saturday said that the incident would not have happened had the student not gone to the college alone and that she should have taken some friends with her or informed people before going there.

"This incident has sent a message to girls that if someone calls you when the college is closed, don't go, nothing good will come of it. If that girl had not gone there, this incident wouldn't have happened," Mitra said.

"The one who committed this dirty deed took advantage of the situation," he said. Mitra's comments came a day after TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee had



Rallies held

Kolkata: Senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari led a rally Sunday in protest against the alleged gang rape of a first-year student of a state-run law college in the city demanding security for every daughter across West Bengal. Similar rallies were also taken out by the Congress, CPI(M) and civil society members in the city and its outskirts.

Friday said, "If a friend rapes a friend, how can you ensure security? Will the police be there in schools? This was done by students to another student. Who will protect her (victim)?"

The TMC distanced itself from the comments of the two leaders and termed those as their personal statements. "The remarks made by MP Kalyan Banerjee and MLA Madan Mitra concerning the heinous crime at South Calcutta Law College were made in their personal capacities. The party unequivocally disassociates itself from their statements and strongly condemns the same. These views do not reflect the position of the party in any manner whatsoever," the Trinamool Congress posted on X. Immediately, Banerjee, the TMC's Serampore MP, questioned whether the party was "indirectly supporting" those leaders who were "shielding the criminals".

SHORT TAKES

Newborn girl found dumped in basket

Mumbai: A three-day-old girl was found abandoned in a basket in Navi Mumbai, with her parents leaving a note in it, apologising and expressing their inability to raise her due to their poor financial condition, police said Sunday. The Navi Mumbai police's crime branch tracked down and detained the infant's father, Aman Iqbal Kondkar, a resident of Bhiwandi in Thane, within 24 hours, an official said. Investigations revealed that the baby was born to an unwed mother, and the parents decided to leave her at an orphanage in Panvel, he said.

AAP suspends Punjab MLA

Chandigarh: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Sunday suspended Amritsar North MLA and former IPS officer Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh from the party for five years for allegedly indulging in anti-party activities. Singh's suspension came days after he questioned the manner in which a Vigilance Bureau team raided the residence of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia in Amritsar in a disproportionate assets case. The decision to suspend Singh from the party was taken by the AAP's political affairs committee, party sources said, adding the government's message is clear that politics cannot be tolerated in the campaign against drugs.

Three dead as two motorcycles collide

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: Three persons died after two motorcycles collided head-on in Maharashtra's Beed district Sunday, a police official said. The incident took place at 7am on the Bardapur-Hatola road in Beed, some 125 kilometres from here, he added. "Four persons were travelling on two motorcycles, both of which were speeding. Three of them died while undergoing treatment. They have been identified as Farukh Pathan, Naseer Shaikh and Abhay Chavan. One person is injured," the Badarpur police station official said.

3 family members killed in house fire

Kolkata: Three members of a family were killed when a fire broke out at their Asansol house in West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district early Sunday, a senior police officer said. According to their neighbours, the fire started around 2 am on the ground floor of the standalone building.

Shah rules out talks with Maoists



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, June 29: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Sunday ruled out any talks with Maoists and said the cadre of the proscribed outfit should give up arms, surrender before police, and join the mainstream.

Addressing a rally after inaugurating the National Headquarters of the Turmeric Board in Nizamabad in Telangana, Shah also said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is still raising questions on Operation Sindoor, should see the weak appearance of Pakistan to understand the effectiveness of the Operation. "Congress asks (the Centre) to hold discussions with these people (Maoists). Our government's policy is 'no talks'

with those who hold arms. Give up weapons, surrender, and join the mainstream," Shah said.

He further said that about 10,000 people in the Northeast gave up weapons and joined the mainstream. They even contested elections held for positions ranging from the Taluk level to state assemblies. Similarly, more than 2,000 Maoists have surrendered in the past one and a half years.

"Give up weapons and surrender. If you don't surrender, we have decided that before 31 March 2026, Naxalism will be finished in this country," the Home Minister said.

He said 40,000 people lost their lives since about four decades in Naxal violence in Adivasi regions.

Many Adivasis lost their limbs or even their lives, he said. Those who talk in favour of Naxalism, what would they reply to the family members of Adivasis and security personnel who lost their lives in Maoist violence, he asked. He said he fears that Congress should not give shelter in Telangana to Naxals who are on the run across the country.



People visit the Taj Mahal amid rain in Agra, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

EC to upload 2003 Bihar voter list for special revision drive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: The Election Commission will soon upload the 2003 Bihar electoral roll on its website to facilitate the nearly 4.96 crore voters whose names figure on it extract the relevant portion to be attached with the enumeration form for the special intensive revision of the voters' list.

As Opposition parties questioned the revision exercise, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar told PTI Sunday that the purpose is to ensure that no eligible citizen is left out of the electoral rolls and no ineligible person is a part of it. Several Opposition parties have said that the intensive revision carries the risk of willful exclusion of vot-

ers using the state machinery. A senior functionary asserted that anyone opposing the exercise is also opposing Article 326 and should therefore clarify their stand.

Article 326 says that all eligible citizens should be included in the electoral rolls, and those not eligible or not citizens of India cannot be part of the voters' list.

EC functionaries pointed out that during the ongoing SIR in Bihar, the poll authority advised political parties to appoint their workers as booth level agents (BLAs) in all polling stations now rather than finding faults with the electoral rolls later.

On Saturday, the commission said all recognised national and state political parties



have already appointed 1,54,977 BLAs. They can still appoint more, it pointed out. BLAs are party workers who coordinate with booth level officers (BLOs) during the preparation or revision of the voters' list. According to the instructions issued by

As Opposition parties questioned the revision exercise, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar told PTI Sunday that the purpose is to ensure that no eligible citizen is left out of the electoral rolls and no ineligible person is a part of it

Several Opposition parties have said that the intensive revision carries the risk of willful exclusion of voters using the state machinery

the poll authority to its Bihar poll machinery, the 4.96 crore voters -- 60 per cent of the total electors -- who were listed in the 2003 special intensive revision need not submit any supporting document to establish their date or place or birth except the relevant portion of

the electoral roll brought out after the revision.

The other three crore -- nearly 40 per cent -- will have to provide one of the 11 listed documents to establish their place or date of birth.

Here too, the voters whose parents have been named in the 2003 voters' list, will have to only give documents about their place/date of birth. They will not have to give documents regarding the place/date of birth of their parents as their entry in the 2003 list will be considered as proof, underlined an official.

Bihar, as of now, has more than 7.89 crore voters spread across 243 assembly seats. Polls in the state are due later this year. According to EC instructions, the electoral registration

officer (ERO) of each assembly constituency will be responsible for ensuring that "no eligible citizen is left out and no ineligible person is included in the electoral roll" while carrying out the revision. The EROs will satisfy themselves regarding the eligibility of every person before entering their name in the electoral roll.

The EC said every existing elector, as on the date, will be provided available an enumeration form through a BLO. The elector can download the enumeration form from a dedicated website.

The BLO will collect a copy of the enumeration form and sign the acknowledgement of receipt on the second copy to be retained by the existing elector.



We have burnt the copies of the GR which means we don't accept it. We don't oppose Hindi but we will not allow its imposition. The government does not understand the reason behind the morcha. Injustice has been meted to Marathi. The question is how much pressure are you going to put on students

ESHWARAPPA HINTS AT RETURN TO BJP

Expelled BJP leader K S Eshwarappa Sunday indicated a possible return to the party, saying "the BJP was his life" and there was no question of him joining any other political outfit



of the day uote

Political leaders were jailed, the judiciary was pressured and press freedom was muzzled

GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT | UNION MINISTER

Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's nationwide campaign 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' was marked today by tree plantation at Vatika Chowk in Gurugram, Haryana

J P NADDA | UNION MINISTER

The government withdrew the GR that made Hindi mandatory. This is a victory of Marathi unity and fear of Thackerays coming together. The July 5 morcha will not take place now. This is brand Thackeray

SAJNAY RAUT | SENA (UBT) LEADER

POST OF THE DAY

Stocks: all time high Real Estate: all time high BTC: all time high Gold: all time high Optimists: central banks are cutting rates. And, inflation is already in control. So the markets will go up!

Pessimists: economies are slowing down. So the central banks are trying to manage a soft landing. So stay away from stocks. Smart investors: buy things that are fair/undervalued. And, manage their risks. They learn capital rotation. Point is:- It is always a good time to invest in the stock markets (provided you can manage your risk).

@Akshat_World

SHORT TAKES

Woman's body found in garbage truck sack

Bangalore: An unidentified woman's body, allegedly stuffed into a sack and dumped in a garbage truck, was found, police said Sunday. The body was discovered under the Chennaiannakere Achukattu Police Station limits. The deceased is believed to be between 30 and 35 years old. Police said the body was tied up and stuffed into a sack, likely dumped in the garbage truck sometime between Saturday night and early Sunday. Based on nearby CCTV footage, police suspect the body may have been transported to the spot in an auto-rickshaw.

Prez on two-day visit of UP from today

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu will visit Uttar Pradesh for two days from Monday, her office said. The President will grace the 11th convocation ceremony of the Indian Veterinary Research Institute at Bareilly Monday, it said. On the same day, she will grace the first convocation ceremony of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Gorakhpur, said a statement issued by the President's secretariat Sunday. On July 1, the President will inaugurate the Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath AYUSH University at Gorakhpur, it said.

Security forces seize explosives

Seraikela: Security forces seized a huge quantity of explosives from a Maoist dump in a forest in Jharkhand's Seraikela-Kharswan district, a police officer said Sunday. The explosives including 500 electronic detonators were seized from a Maoist dump set up in Gobargota forest near Rajjama village, a statement issued by Superintendent of Police Mukesh Kumar Lunayat said.

OPERATION SINDOOR

'Lost jets', claims defence attache; Cong slams govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: The Congress Sunday cited the reported comments of India's defence attache to Indonesia that the Indian Air Force lost fighter jets to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor and accused the government of having "misled" the country.

The party also asked why Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "refusing" to preside over an all-party meeting to take the Opposition into confidence and why the demand for a special session of Parliament has been rejected.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh shared a media report on X which quoted Captain (Indian Navy) Shiv Kumar, speaking at a seminar in Indonesia recently, that the Indian Air Force lost fighter jets to Pakistan on the night of May 7, 2025, during its targeting of terror-linked sites in Pakistan.

However, the Indian embassy in Indonesia, in a post on X Sunday, said that the defence attache's remarks have been "quoted out of context and the media reports are a misrepresentation of the intention and thrust of the presentation made by the speaker".

Referring to media reports, Ramesh said in his post on X, "First the Chief of Defence Staff makes important revelations in Singapore. Then a senior defence official follows up from Indonesia." "But why is the PM refusing to preside over an



all-party meeting and take the Opposition into confidence? Why has the demand for a special session of Parliament been rejected?" he said.

Citing the same media report, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khara said the Modi government has "misled the nation from the start - failing to disclose the aircraft losses during Operation Sindoor". "There were oblique references to losses in air combat on 6/7 May, during a briefing by the DG Air Ops (Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti) when he said - 'we are in a combat situation and losses are a part of combat', he said on X. "Then, it was left to Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan to make the first official admission of our attrition in the air while speaking to Bloomberg TV on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore," Khara said.

"And now, in another shocking revelation by Capt. Shiv

Kumar, it has emerged that the Indian Air Force lost fighter jets to Pakistan on the night of May 7, 2025, during its targeting of Pakistan's terror-linked sites 'only because of the constraint given by the political leadership'," the Congress leader said.

"This is a direct indictment of the Modi Government, particularly Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. No wonder they are ducking our demand for a Special Session of Parliament like the plague," he alleged.

They know they've compromised national security, and they're terrified of what the Congress party will expose before the people of India, Khara claimed. The Indian embassy in Indonesia said it has seen media reports regarding "a presentation made by the Defence Attache at a seminar". "His remarks have been quoted out of context and the media reports are a misrepresentation of the intention and thrust of the presentation made by the speaker.

Violence drops, drug seizures rise in Manipur under President's rule

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, June 29: Manipur has witnessed a significant decline in violence, with a sharp drop in civilian deaths and injuries and a marked increase in drug seizures since the imposition of President's rule in February, officials said here Sunday.

Besides, Manipur Police, Assam Rifles and other paramilitary forces are also working tirelessly to recover thousands of weapons looted from police armouries following the outbreak of violence in May 2023, they said.

Despite the relative calm, challenges remain for the security forces to recover thousands of lost arms and addressing the activities of the banned valley-based terrorist groups involved in extortion and petty crimes, they added.

The recent crackdown on cadres of Meitei outfit Arambai Tenggol, accused of allegedly engineering violence against the Kuki people and indulging in largescale violence within the valley, has also been helpful in bringing a sense of peace in certain parts of the state, officials said.

Recently, a dismissed police head constable of Manipur Police and a prominent Arambai Tenggol leader Asem Kanan Singh and four associates were arrested in a joint operation of Manipur Police and the CBI.

Singh was wanted for many cases including an alleged attack on Additional Superintendent of Manipur police last year. During the period of central rule beginning February 13, only one protest-related fatality has been reported, a stark contrast to the 260 fatalities documented from May 3, 2023, until the enforcement of President's rule, they said.

HINDI ROW

Maha govt withdraws three-language policy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 29: Facing mounting Opposition to the introduction of Hindi language in Maharashtra schools from Classes I to V, the state cabinet Sunday decided to withdraw two GRs (government orders) on the implementation of the three-language policy.

Immediately after the announcement, the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) said the protest march planned July 5 against the GRs has been cancelled.

However, Uddhav Thackeray said that a programme will take place July 5 to celebrate the "unity of the Marathi mannos". Addressing a press conference in Mumbai on the eve of the monsoon session of state legislature, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the GRs have been withdrawn, and announced the formation of a committee headed by educationist Narendra Jadhav to suggest

the way forward on the re-language policy. "Why was the government so adamant about the Hindi language and who exactly was pressuring the government for this remains a mystery," Raj Thackeray said on X. "Do not create confusion with the (Jadhav) committee's report again, otherwise the government should note that this committee will not be allowed to function in Maharashtra," he said. Uddhav Thackeray told reporters that the BJP-led government was forced to withdraw the GRs owing to the strong unity shown by Marathi mannos.

Fadnavis alleged that as chief minister Uddhav Thackeray had accepted the recommendations of the Dr Raghunath Mashelkar committee to introduce a three-language policy from Class I to XII and set up

a committee on the policy implementation.

Uddhav dismissed the claim, saying he had appointed a study group on Mashelkar panel suggestions, but the group did not hold even a single meeting.

"The state cabinet was decided to withdraw the Government Resolutions (GR) issued in April and June regarding the implementation of the three-language policy from class one. A committee headed by Dr Narendra Jadhav will be formed to recommend implementation (of the three-language formula)," Fadnavis said.

The Fadnavis government had issued a GR April 16, making Hindi a compulsory third language for students in classes 1 to 5 studying in English and Marathi medium schools.

Amid backlash, the government issued an amended GR June 17 making Hindi an optional language. Maharashtra

marks opposing the imposition of Hindi found unexpected support from the MNS, which prominently featured his photograph and quote on its posters ahead of the July 5 protest. The party displayed the state tribal development minister's quotes on its banners in some parts of Mumbai.

Uike had recently said that he would speak only in Marathi, asserting, "I was born in a tribal family. My mother, who was illiterate, instilled in me the values of Marathi. I don't know Hindi, and I will not speak in Hindi." Hours before Fadnavis made the announcement, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar Sunday said efforts were being made to ensure that the need for the July 5 march against the three-language formula did not arise.

The Fadnavis government had issued a GR April 16, making Hindi a compulsory third language for students in classes 1 to 5 studying in English and Marathi medium schools

Kerala couple held after baby deaths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thrissur (Kerala), June 29: The Kerala police have taken a man and a woman into custody after the remains of two newborn babies were found, one of whom is believed to have been murdered.

The couple, who were in a relationship but not married, were taken into custody on Sunday, after the man walked into Pudukad police station here carrying a bag that he said contained the skeletal remains of two babies. Police said the man was drunk when he arrived at the police station at 12.30 am Sunday and claimed the babies had died in separate incidents.

Launching an investigation, the police soon took the woman into custody. According to them, the woman told police that the first baby died naturally after its umbilical cord got wrapped around its neck during birth.

She said she buried the baby near her home and kept the remains to perform rituals. The second baby, however, is believed to have been suffocated shortly after birth, police said. The woman allegedly admitted to killing the newborn after it cried. She then gave the body to the man, who buried it.



A fisherman casting a net in the Hooghly is silhouetted against scattered clouds in Nadia, West Bengal

PTI PHOTO

J'hkhand: 162 students trapped in flooded school rescued

Jamshedpur (Jharkhand): At least 162 students trapped in an inundated private residential school in Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district after heavy rain were rescued by the police Sunday, a senior officer said. The students were trapped in the school located at Pandarsoli on the Haldipokhar-Kowali Road in Kowali police station area since Saturday night after the premises got flooded due to heavy rain. "We received information that 162 students of Lav Kush Residential School were trapped as the school premises were inundated due to heavy rain. As the school building was submerged, the teachers shifted all the students to the rooftop, where they spent the night. "On being informed around 5.30 am today, police officers and fire brigade teams rushed to the spot and rescued the students one by one with the help of villagers," Superintendent of Police (Rural) Rishabha Garg told PTI. He said boats were used for the rescue operation while the NDRF was requisitioned.

SNIPPETS

83 Bangladeshi nationals held in east Delhi for illegal stay

New Delhi: Delhi Police has apprehended 83 Bangladeshi nationals, including 33 minors, from various localities of east Delhi for staying illegally in the national capital, an official Sunday said. The action was part of an ongoing special drive launched in November 2024 to identify and take legal action against illegal immigrants, police said. "So far, a total of 120 Bangladeshi nationals have been apprehend under the drive," said the officer. Of the 83 people detained, 44 are women and 39 are men, he added. The officer said that they were found residing in areas, including Mandawali, Mayur Vihar, Kalyanpuri and localities like Ghazipur and Anand Vihar.

Thane court acquits woman in flesh trade case after 10 years

Thane: A Thane court has acquitted a 57-year-old woman accused in a 2015 case of trafficking women and pushing them into prostitution, giving her the benefit of doubt. Additional Sessions Judge AS Bhagwat, in the order passed on June 21, held the prosecution failed to prove the charges levelled against the accused, Madhu Arjun Yadav, beyond all reasonable doubts. A copy of the order was received Saturday. The prosecution told the court that officials of the Thane police's anti-human trafficking cell raided an apartment at Savarkar Nagar in Maharashtra's Thane city February 10, 2015 following a tip-off, and arrested the accused after sending a decoy customer. The police had also rescued from there three women who were pushed into flesh trade, as per the prosecution. The accused was booked under Indian Penal Code section 370 (trafficking of persons) and provision of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act. The judge, however, noted the decoy and the victims (those rescued after the raid) were not examined by the prosecution.

Census 2026 to begin with houselisting ops from April 1

The Census is a two-phase exercise -- in phase one i.e. Houselisting Operation (HLO), the housing conditions, assets and amenities of each household will be collected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: The houselisting operations for the forthcoming Census will begin from April 1, 2026, marking the start of the first phase of the decennial exercise, the Registrar General of India has said.

In a letter to chief secretaries of states and Union Territories, Census Commissioner and Registrar General of India Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan said the Houselisting Operations and Housing Census shall begin April 1, 2026.

Before that the appointment of supervisors, enumerators

and work distribution among them shall be done with cooperation from states and district administration, it said.

The Census is a two-phase exercise -- in phase one i.e. Houselisting Operation (HLO), the housing conditions, assets and amenities of each household will be collected.

Subsequently, in the second phase i.e. Population Enumeration (PE), the demographic, socio-economic, cultural and other details of every person in each household will be collected which is scheduled for February 1, 2027, according to the letter.



In the Census, Caste enumeration will also be done, a government statement had said. For Census activities, over

34 lakh enumerators and supervisors and around 1.3 lakh Census functionaries would be deployed.

It is the 16th Census till now and the eighth after independence. The forthcoming Census will be conducted through digital means using mobile applications. Provision of self-enumeration would also be made available to the people.

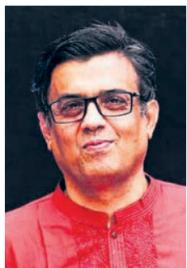
The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner had prepared around three dozen questions to be asked to the citizens.

The survey will ask households about ownership of items like phones, internet, vehicles (bicycle, scooter, motorcycle, car, jeep, van),

and appliances (radio, TV, transistor) among others.

The citizens will also be asked about cereal consumption, sources of drinking water and lighting, type and access to latrines, wastewater disposal, bathing and kitchen facilities, fuel used for cooking and LPG/PNG connection.

Additional questions include the materials used for the floor, walls and roof of the house, its condition, number of residents, number of rooms, presence of married couples, and whether the household head is a female or belongs to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe.



The upcoming national election will be the most credible and peaceful one in the country's history
SHAFIQU ALAM | PRESS SECRETARY OF CHIEF ADVISER MUHAMMAD YUNUS, BANGLADESH

HEATWAVE BAKES SOUTHERN EUROPE
Major heat waves across Southern Europe have pushed temperatures above 40 C (104 F) in countries including Italy, Spain and Greece, as local authorities issued fresh warnings against the risk of wildfires. Experts link the rising frequency and intensity of these heatwaves to climate change, warning that such extreme weather events are becoming increasingly common across Europe's southern region



of the day quote

MAKE THE DEAL IN GAZA. GET THE HOSTAGES BACK!!!
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US



Serbia won. You cannot destroy Serbia with violence. They consciously wanted to spur bloodshed. The time of accountability is coming
ALEKSANDAR VUCIC | PRESIDENT, SERBIA



Afghan families are being uprooted once again (in Pakistan), arriving with scant belongings, exhausted, hungry, scared about what awaits them in a country many of them have never even set foot in
ARAFAT JAMAL | UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE IN THE AFGHAN CAPITAL, KABUL



Drones blanket Ukrainian skies

Russia launches biggest aerial attack since start of war, says Ukraine

REUTERS

Kyiv, June 29: A Ukrainian F-16 fighter pilot died in a crash while repelling a Russian air attack that involved hundreds of drones, cruise and ballistic missiles, authorities said Sunday, as Moscow intensifies nighttime air barrages in the fourth year of war.

The Ukrainian military said in total Russia launched 477 drones and 60 missiles of various types to Ukraine overnight. Ukrainian forces destroyed 211 of the drones and 38 missiles, it said, while 225 more drones were either lost due to electronic warfare or were decoys that carried no explosives.

"Moscow will not stop as long as it has the capability to launch massive strikes," Zelenskyy said on X. He said Russia had launched around 114 missiles, 1,270 drones, and 1,100 glide bombs just in the past week.

Russia's state-run RIA Novosti news agency said one person was killed by a Ukrainian drone in the Russian-controlled part of Ukraine's Luhansk region. Both Ukraine and Russia say they do not attack civilian targets.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for more support from Washington and Western allies to bolster Ukraine's air defences after the attack, which damaged homes and infrastructure across the country and injured at least 12 people, according to local authorities.



- Russian attack involved more than 500 drones, missiles
- In the past week, Moscow has launched around 114 missiles, 1,270 drones, and 1,100 glide bombs
- Ukraine loses third F-16 since deploying the jets last year

This war must be brought to an end - pressure on the aggressor is needed, and so is protection. Ukraine needs to strengthen its air defence - the thing that best protects lives
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

Ukraine has now lost three F-16s since it began operating the US-made jets last year. Kyiv has not revealed the size of its F-16 fleet, but they have become a central and heavily used part of Ukraine's defences.

POLITICAL WILL

Ukraine says recent attacks highlight the need for further support from Washington, which under President Donald Trump has not committed to new military aid for Ukraine.

Trump said he was considering a Ukrainian request for more Patriot missile, opens new tab batteries after he met Zelenskyy at a NATO summit

last Wednesday.

He said Ukraine was ready to buy the American air defence systems and it counts on "leadership, political will, and the support of the United States, Europe, and all our partners."

Russia has launched large scale strikes on Ukrainian cities every few days in recent weeks, causing widespread damage, killing dozens of civilians and injuring hundreds more.

During the latest barrage, explosions were heard in Kyiv, Lviv, Poltava, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Cherkasy and the Ivano-Frankivsk regions, witnesses and regional governors said.

Trump's sweeping tax-cut, spending bill clears first US Senate hurdle

REUTERS

Washington, June 29: The Republican-controlled US Senate narrowly advanced President Donald Trump's, sweeping tax-cut and spending bill Saturday, during a marathon weekend session marked by political drama, division and lengthy delays as Democrats sought to slow the legislation's path to passage.



Lawmakers voted 51-49 to open debate on the 940-page megabill, with two of Trump's fellow Republicans joining Democrats to oppose the legis-

lation that would fund the president's top immigration, border, tax-cut and military priorities.

Trump on social media hailed the "great victory" for his "great, big, beautiful bill."

After hours of delay, during which Republican leaders and Vice President JD Vance worked behind closed doors to persuade last-minute holdouts to support the measure, Democrats demanded that the megabill first be read aloud in the chamber - a task that could delay the start of the debate until Sunday afternoon.

Democrats say the bill's tax cuts would disproportionately benefit the wealthy at the expense of social programs for lower-income Americans.

"Senate Republicans are scrambling to pass a radical bill, released to the public in the dead of night, praying the American people don't realize what's in it," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said on the Senate floor.

"Democrats are going to force this chamber to read it from start to finish," he said.

NO FAMILY, NO ENGLISH PIO woman missing after flying to US

AGENCIES

Washington, June 29: A 24-year-old Indian woman who arrived in the United States for a reported arranged marriage has gone missing, authorities have said.

Simran Simran was last seen shortly after her arrival from India in New Jersey June 20. Surveillance footage reviewed by Lindenwold police showed her checking her phone and seemingly waiting for someone. Officers said she did not appear to be in distress in the video.

Simran was reported missing Wednesday, five days after her arrival, police confirmed. Officials investigating her disappearance said a preliminary probe revealed she travelled to the US for an arranged marriage.

Authorities are also exploring the possibility that the marriage was an excuse to obtain free airfare to America, as per reports.



Simran has no known relatives in the United States and does not speak English, police said. Her only phone is an international device that functions solely through Wi-Fi. Authorities have so far been unable to reach any family members in India.

"At this time there are no known family members in India to contact to obtain information on her possible whereabouts," Lindenwold police said Thursday.

Contribute to stable borders, Xi tells Tibetans near Arunachal Pradesh

China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet, which is firmly rejected by India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, June 29: Chinese President Xi Jinping Sunday called on the Tibetan residents of a village situated near the Indian border to contribute towards fostering prosperity and stability in the border areas.

Learning that the village has undergone new changes in recent years and villagers' incomes have increased, I feel happy for you," Xi replied to a letter received from residents of Nyingchi, a prefecture-level area located close to the Arunachal Pradesh border.

China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet, which is firmly rejected by India. Xi visited Nyingchi in 2021, becoming the only Chinese president to have visited the border areas of Tibet.

Xi, in his letter, voiced hope that Nyingchi residents will, under the guidance of the Communist Party's policies to develop border areas and improve people's lives, do an even better job in protecting the natural beauty of the plateau region, developing the village's tourist brand, and contributing to building a prosperous and stable border area.

In recent years, China has built a number of villages along the Tibetan border areas to ensure border security and development.

In his letter, Xi also urged the people in the Tibet Au-



China rolls over \$3.4bn of commercial loans to Pak

Karachi: China has rolled over \$3.4 billion in loans to Islamabad, which together with other recent commercial and multilateral lending will boost Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves to \$14 billion, a finance ministry source said Sunday. Beijing rolled over \$2.1 billion, which has been in Pakistan's central bank's reserves for the last three years, and refinanced another \$1.3 billion commercial loan, which Islamabad had paid back two months ago, the source said.

tonomous Region to uphold ethnic solidarity and create a happier and better life, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

During his 2021 visit to Nyingchi, Xi visited the Nyang River Bridge to inspect the ecological preservation in the basin of the Brahmaputra River, which is called Yarlung Zangbo in the Tibetan language.

Last year, China approved the construction of the world's largest dam, stated to be the planet's biggest infrastructure project, costing \$137 billion, on the Brahmaputra river in Tibet, which has raised concerns in the riparian states of India and Bangladesh.

Outrage in B'desh over minority community woman's rape video

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, June 29: The alleged rape of a woman belonging to a minority community three days ago in central Bangladesh's Cumilla district sparked nationwide outrage Sunday after a video of the assault went viral.

The main suspect of the alleged rape has been arrested along with several others, police said.

Cumilla district's police chief Nazir Ahmed Khan said the main accused was arrested in a predawn raid at Dhaka's Sayedabad area and four others were apprehended for revealing the picture and identity of the woman on social media.

Students of Dhaka University staged marches in the campus condemning the rape while residents of its Jagannath Hall dormitory, dedicated for minority community students, took out processions calling for justice.

Secretary General of former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir demanded exemplary punitive action against the culprits.

Some media reports suggested the police action came only after the video went viral. According to a report, people in the neighbourhood initially released the culprit after a mass beating and took him to a hospital instead of handing him over to police. The suspect allegedly fled from the hospital.

Ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's son Sajeed Ahmed Wazed, who has served as his mother's advisor, took to X to express his outrage at the incident. He blamed the Yunus administration for a rise in incidents of mob attacks, terrorism and rape in the last 11 months.

Bangladesh witnessed incidents of violence against members of minority communities following the fall of the Hasina-led Awami League government in August last year.

CHINESE CRACKDOWN

REUTERS

Hong Kong, June 29: Hong Kong's League of Social Democrats said Sunday that it would disband amid "immense political pressure" from a five-year-long national security crackdown, leaving the China-ruled city with no formal pro-democracy opposition presence.

The LSD becomes the third major opposition party to shutter in Hong Kong in the past two years.

Co-founded in 2006 by former lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung as a radical wing of the pro-democracy camp, the LSD is the last group in Hong Kong to stage small protests this year.

Mass public gatherings and marches spearheaded by political and civil society groups had been common in Hong Kong until 2020, but the threat of prosecution has largely shut down

HK's last active pro-democracy group disbands

organized protests since. China imposed a national security law on the former British colony in 2020, punishing offences like subversion with possible life imprisonment following mass pro-democracy protests in 2019.

A second set of laws, known as Article 23, was passed in 2024 by the city's pro-Beijing legislature covering crimes such as sedition and treason.

Current chair Chan Po-ying said the group had been "left with no choice" and after considering the safety of party members had decided to shut down. Chan declined to specify what pressures they had faced. "We have endured hardships of internal disputes and



I hope that the people of Hong Kong will continue to pay attention to the vulnerable, and they will continue to speak out for justice
FIGO CHAN | MEMBER, LEAGUE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

the near total imprisonment of our leadership while witnessing the erosion of civil society, the fading of grassroots voices, the omnipresence of red lines and the draconian suppression of dissent," Chan told reporters,

while flanked by six other core members including Tsang Kin-shing, Dickson Chau, Raphael Wong, Figo Chan and Jimmy Sham. In February, the Democratic Party, the city's largest and most popular opposition party, announced it would disband. Several senior members told

- Third major HK democratic party to shut in past 2 years
- Hong Kong's League of Social Democrats used radical street tactics to push for full democracy, riling Beijing

Reuters they had been warned by Beijing that a failure to do so would mean serious consequences including possible arrests.

Earlier this month, China's top official on Hong Kong affairs, Xia Baolong, stressed national security work must continue as hostile forces were still interfering in the city.

"We must clearly see that the anti-China and Hong Kong chaos elements are still ruthless and are renewing various forms of soft resistance," Xia said in a speech in Hong Kong.

The League of Social Democrats is one of Hong Kong's

smaller pro-democracy groups known for its more aggressive tactics and street protests in its advocacy of universal suffrage and grassroots causes including a universal pension scheme. In a 2016 incident, Leung threw a round object at former Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying inside the legislature.

The LSD's founder Leung, 69, was arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit subversion in 2021 in the landmark '47 Democrats' case. He is currently serving a sentence of six years and nine months in prison. Another member, Jimmy Sham, was also jailed in the same case and released in May.

The security laws have been criticised as a tool of repression by the US and Britain, but China says they have restored stability with 332 people so far arrested under these laws.



The overall weak consumption trends prevalent through FY25 had a dampening impact on the domestic decorative paints market, particularly the urban markets
MANISH CHOKSI | VICE-CHAIRMAN, ASIAN PAINTS

ZOMATO'S GOYAL SETS SIGHT ON AVIATION

Deepinder Goyal, founder of Zomato, is now eyeing the regional air travel segment with LAT Aerospace, according to a LinkedIn post by the aerospace startup co-founder Surobhi Das. Goyal's bet on the aviation venture could redefine regional air travel in India which is at a nascent stage, as uncertainty remains over regulatory clearance, technological capability and public adoption



of the day quote

During this period, ethanol has replaced around 232 lakh metric tonnes of crude oil, resulting in a reduction of approximately 698 lakh metric tonnes in carbon emissions
HARDEEP SINGH PURI | UNION MINISTER FOR PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS



The increase in NIMs, which is being targeted at a time when the entire industry is facing challenges on this front, will be achieved while maintaining that the secured retail share in the overall loan mix was at around 31 per cent level
KUMAR ASHISH | HEAD RETAIL ASSETS, RBL BANK



"In the next four to five years between the three brands -- Farmtrac, Powertrac and Kubota -- I think the success is going to come from the new products that we are going to be launching. Lot of work has happened, and a lot of product lines are planned for introduction between now and the next five years...."
NIKHIL NANDA | MD, ESCORTS KUBOTA LTD (EKL)



SHORT TAKES

NLC India secures LOA

Chennai: NLC India Ltd has received a Letter of Award (LOA) from NTPC Ltd for establishment of 450 MW Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) Connected Wind-Solar Hybrid Power project in Rajasthan, the company said. According to the order secured from NTPC Ltd, NLC India would set up the 450 ISTS connected wind-solar power project, supply of hybrid power generated from the said project to NTPC Ltd for a period of 25 years under the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The scheduled commencement of supply date for supplying power from the full project shall be within a period of 24 months from the effective date of the Power Purchase Agreement, it said.

Slice looks to turn profitable

Mumbai: Slice Small Finance Bank has turned profitable on a monthly basis and is aiming to close FY26 in the black, a top official has said. The entity, which came out of a surprising merger between the fintech Slice and the North East SFB a few months ago, is adequately capitalised and not looking to raise any capital, said executive director Rajan Bajaj. The current focus is to build a pan-India business using the low-cost digital channels, and the entity is not interested in any more mergers, Bajaj said, adding that it may look at transitioning to a universal bank in the next five years. The bank is adequately capitalised and the buffers will also be supported by the profits. As per recent media reports, the bank was aiming to raise up to \$300 million in capital.

NTPC Shajapur Solar project operational

New Delhi: State-owned power giant NTPC Sunday said that its step down subsidiary NTPC Renewable Energy has fully commissioned 220-MW Shajapur Solar Project (Unit-II) after operationalising third and last part capacity of 120 MW. The NTPC Renewable Energy is an arm of NTPC Green Energy, which is a subsidiary of NTPC Ltd. According to a regulatory filing, consequent to successful commissioning of third and last part capacity of 120 MW out of 220 MW, Shajapur Solar Project (Unit-II) of NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC Green Energy Ltd at Shajapur, MP, is declared as commercially operational with effect from June 29.

IT giants embrace AI driven future

The IT firms are not building their own large language models (LLMs) to compete with OpenAI or Google. Instead, they are deepening partnerships with hyperscalers (Microsoft, Google, AWS) and chipmakers (Nvidia) to access the latest models and infrastructure



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: Indian IT majors are aggressively repositioning themselves as AI-native firms, focusing on high-margin applications and integration over high-risk, capital-intensive foundational research.

A deep dive into the FY25 annual reports from the industry behemoths, TCS, Infosys, Wipro, and Tech Mahindra -- indicates that in the global AI race, India's tech titans are not competing to invent foundational AI, they are positioning themselves to become premier integrators of it.

The shift from general digital transformation to a specific AI focus is captured in the very titles of their annual reports. TCS frames its strategy within "The Perpetually Adaptive Enterprise," driven by a stated "AI-First approach."

Infosys takes an even more direct path with its theme, "AI Your Enterprise," while Wipro focuses on its role as an enabler in "Helping Clients Build

AI-Powered Future-Ready Businesses."

Tech Mahindra joins this chorus with "AI Delivered Right." The IT firms are laying a greater focus on investing in human capital and upskilling their workforce.

TCS has reported that over 1 lakh of its employees have acquired "higher order skills in AI/ML and GenAI, while Infosys has said that over 2.70 lakh of its employees are now "AI-Aware".

Similar trends are observed in Wipro and Tech Mahindra as well.

"The advent of AI with all its possibilities and potential creates another arc of uncertainty. As enterprises look at applying AI to every aspect of the business, some long-standing challenges will become imperative and self-evident to firms," Infosys Chairman Nandan Nilekani said.

The need to modernise legacy systems and create data architecture so that the entire firm's data is consumable by AI, in a

holistic manner, can no longer be put off, he said and urged enterprises to have an AI foundry and an AI factory to fuel innovation as well as scale.

"Let us think of AI as a gifted child prodigy born and brought up in a library. It has access to all the knowledge in the world. It absorbs everything -- information, fact, fiction, truth, untruth, every pattern of human behaviour. Used well, it can create extraordinary value, particularly for businesses like TechM," Mahindra Group Chairman Anand G Mahindra said.

The global AI market is projected to skyrocket, reaching an estimated USD 1.3 trillion over the next decade, according to industry estimates.

The IT firms are not building their own large language models (LLMs) to compete with OpenAI or Google. Instead, they are deepening partnerships with hyperscalers (Microsoft, Google, AWS) and chipmakers (Nvidia) to access the latest models and infrastructure.

Amul becomes top Indian food brand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: Amul has retained its position as India's top food brand, with brand value of \$4.1 billion followed by Delhi-NCR based Mother Dairy with \$1.15 billion brand value, as per the latest Brand Finance report.

Britannia was ranked third on India's top food brand list, while Karnataka-based dairy cooperative Nandini was at the fourth rank and Dabur was at the fifth place.

UK-based Brand Finance is an independent brand valuation and strategy consultancy. Mother Dairy now holds the 35th spot among India's top 100 brands across industries, as against 41st position in 2024.

Amul bagged the 17th place in the top 100 Indian brands. GCMF's MD Jayen Mehta and Mother Dairy MD Manish Bandlish noted that this recognition is the result of their strong commitment to provide quality products to consumers.

Mehta said, it reflects the collective efforts of millions of dairy farmers and our unwavering commitment to providing high-quality, affordable food

and dairy products to consumers.

As Amul continues to grow and expand its footprint, both in India and internationally, this achievement reinforces our responsibility to uphold the trust placed in us by generations of Indian households, he added.

Manish Bandlish of Mother Dairy said This recognition is both a reflection and a testament to our collective efforts -- a heartfelt thank you to our consumers, farmers, partners, and employees -- this recognition belongs to each one of you.

Our rise among Top 5 Indian Food Brands and also in India's Top 100 brands across industries reflects more than numbers -- it reflects the trust earned, resilience sustained, and the resilience of a brand that continues to evolve, Bandlish said. In 2024-25, Mother Dairy achieved a total turnover of around Rs 17,500 crores, clocking a robust growth of 16 per cent over the last fiscal. Mother Dairy, a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), was established under the novel 'Operation Flood' program.

Macroeconomic data, US tariff to drive stock markets this week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: Stock market investors would track macroeconomic data announcements such as industrial production, US tariff related developments and other global trends this week, which may influence sentiment, analysts said.

Trading activity of foreign investors and crude oil prices would also remain in the limelight during the week, experts noted.

"This week brings a series of important economic data releases from India and the United States, which are likely to influence market sentiment and central bank outlooks. In India, the week begins on June 30 with the release of Industrial Production (YoY) for May.

"July 1, attention will turn to the manufacturing PMI for June, which reflects the health of India's industrial sector and order inflows. This will be followed by the services PMI, July 3," according to Bajaj Broking Research.

Equity benchmarks staged a sharp rally last week helped by easing geopolitical tensions



in the Middle East and a steep decline in crude oil prices. Last week, the BSE benchmark surged 1,650.73 points or 2 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 525.4 points or 2 per cent.

"As the first quarter earnings season draws near, investors are turning their focus to corporate results for early indications of growth trends. There is also heightened anticipation around trade agreements that the United States is expected to finalize with major global partners in the coming week.

Gold likely to remain bearish next week



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: Gold prices are likely to remain under pressure in the coming week as investors await key US macroeconomic data for cues on the Federal Reserve's potential direction on interest rates, which in turn will influence the trajectory for the precious metal, according to analysts.

Meanwhile, US Federal Reserve remains cautious about interest rate cuts, as Fed Chair Jerome Powell during his testimony last week had said that while interest rate cuts are possible, they are not imminent. This has led to a recalibration of gold holdings globally, keeping prices under pressure.

Friday, gold futures declined by Rs 1,563 or 1.61 per cent to close at Rs 95,524 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said the outlook remains pressured due to waning geopolitical concerns, particularly in the Middle East. Gold could move within the range Rs 93,000-97,500 per 10 grams mark on

the MCX and \$3,175-3,325-level in the international markets in the coming week.

The movement will largely depend on the tone of key US macroeconomic data including unemployment figures, non-farm payrolls, and the ADP employment report, he said, adding that any unforeseen geopolitical developments could also influence the sentiment.

Echoing a similar tone, NS Ramaswamy, Head of Commodities & CRM at Ventura, said gold has been struggling to breach the \$3,300-mark in the overseas markets. The safe-haven demand has dampened and the only consolation is a weaker dollar, which is supporting the precious metal.

Ramaswamy highlighted that the dollar index couldn't get enough support from US-China deal. However, there could be a positive impact to the yellow metal on a likely postponement of reciprocal tariffs from the July 9 deadline. Most catalysts currently remain bearish, with limited upside triggers unless there is a reversal in the dollar or a surprise from the US Federal Reserve, Ramaswamy added.

Tata Steel receives show cause notice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 29: Tata Steel Sunday said it has received a show cause-cum-demand (SCN) notice from tax authorities over an alleged irregular availment of input tax credit amounting to over Rs 1,000 crore between FY19 and FY23.

According to the notice, the steel major is required to show cause before the Additional/ Joint Commissioner of Central GST and Excise, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand within 30 days to question against the notice, Tata Steel said in a stock exchange filing.

The notice, issued by the Office of the Commissioner (Audit), Central Tax, Ranchi, June 27, said the input tax credit was availed in contravention of the provisions of Section 74(1) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017/State Goods and Services Act, 2017 (CGST/SGST) read with Section 20 Integrated Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017. The company said it has already paid a GST of Rs 514,19,36,211 in the normal course of business.

"The above GST amount is proposed to be appropriated in the notice and therefore alleged GST exposure is Rs 493,35,47,131 only," the filing said.

India's auto sector powers \$5 trillion economy

EVs in India are steadily growing. In 2024-25, EVs made up over 6 per cent of all vehicles sold, with two-wheelers and three-wheelers leading the trend

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 29: As India moves closer to achieving its \$5 trillion economy dream, the automobile sector is emerging as a strong pillar of growth by contributing around 7.1 per cent to the country's GDP and nearly 49 per cent to its manufacturing GDP.

Additionally, it supports over 3.7 crore jobs and accounts for close to 8 per cent of India's total exports. Clearly, the performance of this sector is closely linked to the overall economic growth of the country.

More than just a commercial industry, the auto sector is now seen as a reflection of India's growing power in global manufacturing and innovation.

As of financial year 2024-25,

India is the third-largest automobile market in the world by sales and the fourth-largest in terms of production. The country produced over 31 million vehicles across various segments. This included more than 5 million passenger cars, 1 million commercial vehicles, 1 million three-wheelers, and nearly 24 million two-wheelers.

In terms of exports, India shipped around 5.7 million vehicles to markets like Japan, Mexico, Latin America, and Africa.

This rapid growth has been supported by government policies aimed at boosting local manufacturing, reducing imports, promoting clean technologies, and making India a key player in global supply chains.

One of the most important schemes has been the Produc-



tion Linked Incentive (PLI) for the automobile and auto components sector.

With a budget of Rs 25,938 crore, this scheme is focused on promoting electric vehicles (EVs), hydrogen vehicles, autonomous systems, and advanced vehicle technologies.

By early 2025, this scheme had attracted investment pro-

posals worth over Rs 67,000 crore. It is expected to generate Rs 2.3 lakh crore in additional sales and create 7.5 lakh direct jobs.

However, out of the total \$23 billion approved under PLI schemes across all sectors, only \$1.7 billion has been disbursed so far, raising concerns about slow implementation.

Another major initiative is

the FAME-II scheme (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles), launched with a budget of Rs 11,500 crore.

It supports the adoption of electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, buses, and taxis. Over 1.3 million EVs have already been supported under this scheme.

Originally planned to end in March 2024, the scheme has been extended until March 2025 to keep up the EV push.

To reduce dependency on imported batteries, the government also launched a PLI scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage with an outlay of Rs 18,100 crore. Three companies are already working on building battery gigafactories under this

scheme. This is important because batteries make up more than 40 per cent of the total cost of an EV.

The Vehicle Scrap Policy is another key effort aimed at removing old and polluting vehicles from Indian roads. This is expected to improve air quality, road safety, and increase the demand for newer, more efficient vehicles.

The electric vehicle market in India is steadily growing. In 2024-25, EVs made up over 6 per cent of all vehicles sold, with two-wheelers and three-wheelers leading the trend.

In May 2025, electric car sales touched 12,304 units, crossing the 4 per cent mark in market share for the first time -- up from 2.57 per cent in May 2024.

Rohit relives T20 World Cup triumph Chennai Bulls script history

Sunday marked the first anniversary of the memorable win in Barbados that broke 13 years of World Cup title drought for India



Barbados will forever be in my veins. This is the proudest moment of my cricketing career. To lift that trophy, to be crowned ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 Champions—it was surreal
ROHIT SHARMA

New Delhi, June 29: It's already a year since India beat South Africa by seven runs to win the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup and Rohit Sharma, who captained the team to championship glory in Barbados, said it was a surreal feeling to be crowned as winners of the glittering silverware.

As a youngster, Rohit was a member of the team winning 2007 Men's T20 World Cup in South Africa. But after winning 2013 Champions Trophy, India had their so close yet so far moments of winning titles till that glorious day in Barbados arrived, where Rohit & Co broke the trophy drought in style in an unbeaten campaign.

"Barbados will forever be in

my veins. This is the proudest moment of my cricketing career. To lift that trophy, to be crowned ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 Champions—it was surreal. I played in the inaugural 2007 T20 World Cup and we won under MS Dhoni's captaincy. And now, to win it again with Rahul Dravid as head coach—it meant everything to this group.

"We've seen heartbreak. We've come so close. That's

why this one was so special. We worked and planned relentlessly—every day. And when we finally won, all the emotions came pouring out. The younger players, especially those playing their first World Cup, realised how hard it is to win one. Nothing can be taken for granted. It was magical," said Rohit to JioHotstar.

What was going through his mind before taking the field for the final, which also became

his last game for India in T20Is after the championship glory was achieved? Rohit admitted that he didn't sleep well in the night before the final and nervous energy led to him waking up much earlier than expected.

"Thirteen years is a long time. Most people don't even have a 13-year career. So, to wait that long to win a World Cup... the last one I won was in 2007. For me, it couldn't have gotten any bigger than this. I didn't sleep the whole night. I was only thinking about the World Cup. I was nervous. I couldn't feel my legs. Did I feel nerves? Of course."

"I just don't show it—but inside, it was a lot. We were supposed to leave around 8:30 or 9 in the morning. But I woke up at 7. From my room, I could see the ground and just kept watching it. I remember thinking—"In two hours, I'll be there. And in four hours, the result will be out. Either the Cup will be here or it won't."

With the bat, India posted 176/7, thanks to Virat Kohli's crucial 76 and his 72-run partnership with Axar Patel in the title clash.

BULLS CLAIM MAIDEN RUGBY PREMIER LEAGUE TITLE WITH WIN OVER REDZ



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 29: Chennai Bulls produced a brilliant performance to win the inaugural Rugby Premier League title with a thumping 41-0 victory over Delhi Redz in a one-sided final here Sunday.

The margin of victory is the biggest across the first season of the event.

Meanwhile, Hyderabad Heroes, who had finished top of the table in the league stage, secured a third-place finish after they won 17-12 against the Bengaluru Bravehearts.

Chennai Bulls picked up from where they had left off in the semi-finals, and hit the Delhi Redz hard in the opening exchanges.

Vaafauese Maliko got the opening try of the final and Filipe Sauturaga was on hand

to convert. Moments later, the Redz felt the full force of the Bulls' attack as Joseva Talacolo rounded off a superb move with five more points to the cause.

Before the end of the first half, the Bulls had further extended their lead – Terry Kennedy outpaced the Redz for two more tries, and Gaurav Kumar added two more from the kick.

At half time, the Bulls were in complete control, and led 24-0.

After the break, the domination continued, and the Redz were finding it hard to break down the Bulls.

Meanwhile, the Bulls were doing their bit to pile on the pressure, as Shanawaz Ahmed went over the line after Kennedy set him up. And Filipe Sauturaga added two more points to the tall.

With four minutes to go,

Bulls had a 31-0 lead in their favour, and they went on to add a couple of more tries by Mohammed Ashique, to put the seal on what was a comprehensive win.

Earlier in the day, Hyderabad Heroes clinched third place as they saw off a spirited challenge from Bengaluru Bravehearts.

The Heroes, who were trailing in the early stages, fought back with full force and won 17-12.

For the Bravehearts, Tone Shiu and Philip Wokorach scored tries, while Akula Rokolisoa converted one kick, all in the first half.

The Heroes, who had begun the fightback through Joji Nasova's try and Manuel Moreno's conversion in the first half, had Kevin Wekesa and Bhupinder Singh adding game-changing tries to the cause.

SHORT TAKES

Doping: AFI cracks down on coaches

New Delhi: The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has set July 31 deadline for mandatory registration of all the coaches -- qualified and unqualified -- in the country in its bid to tackle spiralling doping cases, making it clear that non compliance of the directive will lead to their blacklisting. In its latest circular, following its decision in the January Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) to crack the whip on coaches suspected to be involved in doping of their wards, the AFI said that unregistered coaches, regardless of their qualifications, will not be permitted to impart training to athletes. "AFI has decided to register all coaches, qualified or unqualified who are engaged in training athletes across various venues throughout the country," the national federation said in a circular Saturday. "Registration with AFI is mandatory for all coaches, regardless of their qualifications as unregistered coaches will not be permitted to impart training to athletes and will not be engaged in any activity of the AFI under any circumstances."

Shuttlers reach finals

Iowa: Talented Indian shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Ayush Shetty moved into the finals of the US Open badminton tournament in contrasting fashion as they continued their impressive run in the Super 300 Tournament here. The 16-year-old unseeded Indian Tanvi defeated Ukraine's seventh-seeded Polina Buhrova 21-14, 21-16 in the women's singles semifinal in just 34 minutes to make it to the title round. This was the teenager's second career victory against the Ukrainian in as many outings. Tanvi will take on top seed Beiwen Zhang of the United States in the final. Ayush, seeded fourth here, created a big upset by overcoming the challenge of top seed and world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese-Taipei 21-23, 21-15, 21-14 in a gruelling men's singles contest that lasted more than an hour. Ayush will face another tough opponent in third-seed Brian Yang on Canada. Yang overcame the challenge of Chinese-Taipei's Liao Jhuo-Fu 21-10, 21-12.

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Back-to-back win for Blue Tigresses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chiang Mai (Thailand), June 29: The Indian senior women's team continued their impressive run in the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers with a commanding 4-0 victory over Timor-Leste here Sunday.

Winger Manisha Kalyan (12', 80') scored a brilliant brace, while Anju Tamang (58') and Lynda Kom Serto (86') added their names to the scoresheet in a one-sided contest that saw India dominate from start to finish at the 700th Anniversary Stadium. The Blue Tigresses led 1-0 at half-time.

With the win, India now sit atop Group B with six points from two games, ahead of Iraq and Thailand, who are set to face each other later in the day.

The top spot in the five-team group remains up for grabs, but India have certainly staked a strong claim with back-to-back dominant displays.

Fresh from the record-breaking 13-0 triumph over Mongolia in their opening fixture, India entered the match brimming with confidence.

Right from kick-off, India picked up from where they left off against Mongolia, applying pressure high up the pitch and creating opportunities with slick passing and energetic wing play.

The first chance came as early as the sixth minute when Tamang latched onto a through ball, but Timor-Leste goalkeeper Gorlette Da Costa did well to deny her at the near post. However, the breakthrough came soon after.

A neat one-two between Manisha and Tamang unlocked the left side of Timor-Leste's defence. Tamang released Manisha with a perfectly weighted pass, and the forward showed blistering pace to beat her



■ India continue winning ways with 4-0 victory against Timor-Leste
■ With the win, India now sit atop Group B with six points from two games

marker before cutting inside and rifling a powerful left-footed strike into the back of the net.

The early goal gave India a firm grip on the contest. The Blue Tigresses dictated the tempo with ease, dominating possession and probing constantly for openings.

Pyari Xaxa nearly made it 2-0, but her curling shot rattled the woodwork. Moments later, Soumya Guguloth tested Da Costa again, who stood firm despite the relentless Indian pressure.

Timor-Leste offered very little going forward and opted to sit deep in an attempt to absorb

India's attacking threat.

Their conservative approach did little to disrupt India's rhythm, and the first half ended with them in complete control, albeit with only one goal to show for it.

India resumed the second half with renewed intent. The reward for their persistence came in the 58th minute when Sanju's teasing cross from the left caused chaos in the Timor-Leste box. Goalkeeper Da Costa misjudged the flight, and Tamang capitalised, tapping in from close range to double India's lead. Manisha then produced a moment of sheer class.

Tamang, who had been involved in much of India's attacking play, slipped in a clever pass to the edge of the box. Manisha took one touch before blasting a thunderous shot past Da Costa to make it 3-0 and all but sealed full points.

Disappointing campaign by eves

Indian women's team suffers eighth defeat in FIH Pro League, relegated to Nations Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berlin, June 29: Already relegated from the FIH Pro League, the Indian women's hockey team squandered a one-goal lead to lose 2-3 against China and suffer its eighth consecutive defeat in the event here Sunday.

The defeat meant India ended at the bottom of the nine-team standings with 10 points from 16 matches.

After finishing last, the Indian team has been relegated to the FIH Nations Cup, the second tier tournament of the game's global governing body.

India took the lead through Sunelita Toppa (9th minute) and Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (38th

found the net from a set piece. However, Zhang Ying (19th, 39th) converted two penalty corners, and then Xu Wenyu scored from another set piece to hand China the win.

It was a sloppy start from both sides. China earned the first real chance of the match, but Chen Yang shot wide.

India found their footing soon and took the lead through Toppo. After receiving the ball from Neha Goyal, Sunelita entered the circle and scored with a well-executed reverse hit.

China secured their second penalty corner in the 11th minute, but the Indians defended bravely. China earned two more penalty corners in the 50th minute but wasted the chances.

However, the relentless Chinese secured another penalty corner in the 53rd minute and Zhang's flick was beautifully deflected in by Xu for the winner.

Norris cuts Piastri's lead with Austrian Grand Prix triumph



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Spielberg (Austria), June 29: Lando Norris held off a race-long challenge from his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri to win the Austrian Grand Prix Sunday and lift his Formula 1 title hopes.

Norris and Piastri battled for the lead early on, with the Australian briefly into the lead before Norris took the position back. A rash lunge by Piastri nearly caused a collision soon after.

Piastri lost ground at the pit stops and was run wide onto the grass by Alpine's Franco Colapinto while cutting through traffic. He soon made up ground on Norris but wasn't quite close enough to try overtaking.

Over the radio, Norris called it a "beautiful one-two" finish for the team. "We had a great battle, that's for sure," he added later. "A lot of stress, but a lot of fun. A nice battle, so well done to Oscar." More than ever this season, the title fight focuses on the two McLarens after defending champion Max Verstappen was hit by Kimi Antonelli on the opening lap, ending his race. Overall leader Piastri leads second-placed Norris by 15 points, with Verstappen still third but now 61 off the lead.

Robotic football kicks off China's leap in humanoid robot innovation

China's humanoid robots generate more football excitement than human counterparts

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, June 29: While China's men's soccer team hasn't generated much excitement in recent years, humanoid robot teams have won over fans in Beijing based more on the AI technology involved than any athletic prowess shown.

Four teams of humanoid robots faced off in fully autonomous 3-on-3 soccer matches powered entirely by artificial intelligence Saturday night

in China's capital in what was touted as a first in China and a preview for the upcoming World Humanoid Robot Games, set to take place in Beijing.

According to the organisers, a key aspect of the match was that all the participating robots operated fully autonomously using AI-driven strategies without any human intervention or supervision.

Equipped with advanced visual sensors, the robots were able to identify the ball and navigate the field with agility.

They were also designed to stand up on their own after falling. However, during the match several still had to be carried off the field on stretchers by staff, adding to the realism of the experience.

China is stepping up efforts



to develop AI-powered humanoid robots, using sports competitions like marathons, boxing, and football as a real-world proving ground.

Cheng Hao, founder and CEO of Booster Robotics, the company that supplied the robot players, said sports compe-

titions offer the ideal testing ground for humanoid robots, helping to accelerate the development of both algorithms and integrated hardware-software systems.

He also emphasised safety as a core concern in the application of humanoid robots.

"In the future, we may arrange for robots to play football with humans. That means we must ensure the robots are completely safe," Cheng said. "For example, a robot and a human could play a match where winning doesn't matter, but real offensive and defensive interactions take place. That would help audiences build trust and understand that robots are safe."

Booster Robotics provided the hardware for all four

university teams, while each school's research team developed and embedded their own algorithms for perception, decision-making, player formations, and passing strategies—including variables such as speed, force, and direction, according to Cheng.

In the final match, Tsinghua University's THU Robotics defeated the China Agricultural University's Mountain Sea team with a score of 5-3 to win the championship.

Wu, a supporter of Tsinghua, celebrated their victory while also praising the competition.

"They (THU) did really well," he said. "But the Mountain Sea team (of Agricultural University) was also impressive. They brought a lot of surprises."