



## Vaani's take

Actor Vaani Kapoor questions cancel culture, calling it toxic and harmful to artistic freedom and creative expression

LEISURE | P2



## Troop entry to Sweida

Israel agrees to allow limited Syrian troop access to Sweida for two days, following intense clashes in Druze-majority city

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## MF norms review

SEBI proposes to review the categorisation of mutual fund schemes to improve clarity and address the issue of overlap

BUSINESS | P11



## Record revenue

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) generated a record revenue of ₹9741 crore in the 2023-24 financial year

SPORTS | P12

## US designates LeT proxy TRF as terror outfit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/New Delhi, July 18: The US has designated The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of the Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), as a 'foreign terrorist organisation' over the Pahalgam terror attack, a move welcomed by India as a 'timely and important' step reflecting strong counter-terror cooperation between the two countries.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, announcing the punitive measure, said it was part of Washington's commitment to countering terrorism and enforcing President Trump's call for justice for the Pahalgam attack.

The TRF, an LeT 'front and proxy,' claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam attack which killed 26 civilians, he said, adding it was "the deadliest attack on civilians in India since the 2008 Mumbai attack conducted by the LeT." PAGE 10

## EU slaps sanctions on Rosneft's India refinery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: The European Union Friday imposed sanctions on the Indian oil refinery of Russian energy giant Rosneft and lowered the oil price cap, as part of a new raft of measures against Russia over its war in Ukraine. The fresh sanctions package on Russia included new banking restrictions, and curbs on fuels made from Russian crude oil.

The lowered oil price cap - currently set at USD 60 per barrel - means Russia will be forced to sell its crude at reduced rates to buyers like India. As the second-largest purchaser of Russian oil, India stands to benefit from this move.

"For the first time, we're designating a flag registry and the biggest Rosneft refinery in India," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said in a post on X.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Not in the voter list? No problem, you can always vote in opinion polls, mood-of-the-nation or exit polls

## Man carries daughter's body in trolley for post-mortem

PNN & AGENCIES

Balasore, July 18: A daily wage earner was forced to carry his daughter's body in a trolley rickshaw to the hospital for post-mortem due to lack of financial resources and official support.

Madhu Bindhani, a resident of Bindhani Sahi in Deula panchayat under Baliapal police station limits, transported his daughter's body in a trolley for nearly 6 km from his house to the Community Health Centre (CHC) for autopsy.

According to Bindhani, his daughter had a history of psychiatric issues. Her body was found hanging from a tree in the village. Upon being informed, the local police arrived at the scene



HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: A Palestinian girl searches through a landfill for firewood, plastic, and canned goods at Al-Zawaideh in central Gaza Strip

AP PHOTO

## No spl courts, all bail: SC

At a time when Indian courts are buckling under an unprecedented weight with the total number of pending cases across high courts and subordinate courts surging past the five crore-mark by the end of 2024, the Supreme Court has come down heavily on the Centre for its failure to set up special courts for NIA and other statutes. The top court observed that no effective measures have been taken by the government to conduct expeditious trials in matters being investigated under special laws such as UAPA. The apex court warned that courts will have to grant bail to NIA and UAPA accused if dedicated courts are not set up for speedy trial of such cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: The Supreme Court Friday pulled up the Centre and Maharashtra government for not creating courts for cases under special statutes concerned that courts will be forced to grant bail to accused.

The order of a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joyimalya Bagchi said, "If the authority fails to establish courts with requisite infrastructure for conducting speedy trial under the NIA Act and other special statutes, the court would invariably be forced to release the accused on bail, as there is no effective mechanism to con-



clude the trial in time bound manner."

The bench told Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Rajkumar Bhaskar Thakre, appearing for the Centre and Maharashtra government, designating the existing courts as special courts amounted to "coercing" the high court to relabel them.

"We are satisfied that no effective or visible steps have been taken to set up special courts for speedy trial in cases under NIA Act and other special statutes. It goes without saying that setting up of special courts would require creation of posts for superior judicial officers, staff, courtroom and basic amenities," the bench said.

The bench said contrary to its orders, an impression was created that designation of existing court as special court under the NIA Act would be sufficient compliance of the directives.

"We are outrightly rejecting this plea taken by the respondents (Centre and the Maharashtra government)," the bench said, proposing if the high court chief justice had agreed to it, the court would call for an explanation.

The bench said designating courts as special courts or entrusting exclusive trial under the NIA Act and other special statutes to the existing courts would be at the cost of under-trials and prisoners of old age, marginalised sections of society, languishing in jails.

The top court passed the order on the bail plea of Kailash Ramchandani, a Naxal sym-

pathiser from Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, who was booked after 15 policemen of a quick response team of state police were killed in an IED blast in 2019.

The top court recalled its earlier order of March 17 which rejected his bail plea filed on the ground of inordinate delay in conclusion of trial and said if the Centre and the state government failed to establish special court for trial of the NIA cases, his plea for relief should be considered on the next hearing.

"Last opportunity is granted to the Centre and the state government to take decision as per the observations made by the court," the bench said and posted the matter after four weeks.

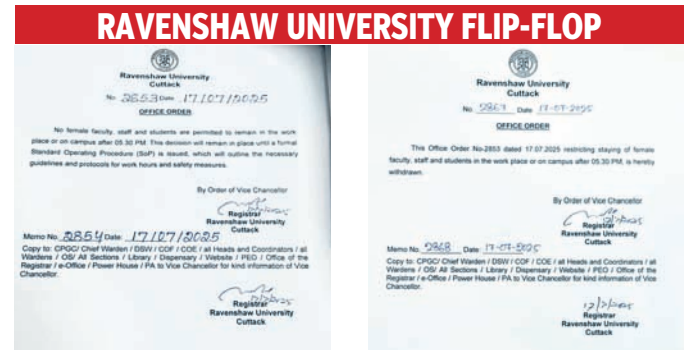
Thakre earlier submitted that a special court was designated in Mumbai for NIA cases with the high court's approval.

The statement irked the bench, which questioned the ASG about cases the judge was already hearing when the court was designated as special NIA court.

"Why should it be done at the cost of other litigants? If you are bringing new statutes, you need to create adequate infrastructure and sanction posts in superior judicial services," the bench said.

The top court asked not for "commitment" but "action from the government."

## Women safe till 5:30pm



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 18: In a move apparently made in the wake of the death by self-immolation of a girl student of FM (Autonomous) College in Balasore over alleged sexual harassment, authorities of the prestigious Ravenshaw University in Cuttack issued a notification barring women faculty members and students from the campus after 5:30pm. After facing criticism from different quarters, the varsity authorities withdrew the order.

In the order issued Thursday and signed by the university registrar, the administration had said: "No female faculty, staff or students are permitted to remain in the workplace or on campus after 5:30pm. This decision will remain in effect until a formal Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is issued."

The directive further noted that in case of urgent work, women would be required to obtain consent from the head

of the department and submit a written request expressing their willingness to stay beyond the specified time.

However, after facing strong backlash from students, civil society, and political leaders, Ravenshaw University revoked the order within hours.

The revised statement read: "The office order restricting the stay of female faculty, staff and students in the workplace or on campus after 5:30pm is hereby withdrawn."

Taking to X, BJD spokesperson and an alumni Lenin Mohanty said, "The shameless Ravenshaw authorities, acting under the direction of their political masters, issued an order asking female students not to stay inside the campus after 5:30pm. Facing backlash over this shameful directive, they were forced to cancel it. Is this how the authorities plan to protect our sisters — by issuing such obnoxious orders? Is Odisha becoming unsafe for women and the girl child?"

## CEO, HR chief caught on 'kiss cam' at Coldplay concert

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: Coldplay lead singer Chris Martin said with an impish laugh, "I hope we didn't do something bad," moments after CEO of data start-up Astronomer Andy Byron and his HR chief Kristin Cabot were caught in an embrace on kiss cam, allegedly cheating with their respective spouses.

The 14-second clip from Wednesday's Coldplay concert in Boston has since gone viral on social media and online discourse taken its natural course through the quips and quirks of memes and jokes.

As the pair rushed to hide their faces from the gigantic screen in the sky, Martin said, "Either they are having an affair or they are very shy."

Soon after this, Astronomer CEO's wife, Megan Kerrigan, removed her surname from her Facebook page, sparking speculations about an impending divorce.

Quickly jumping on the joke wagon, X user Saim Hasan said, "This is why I love Coldplay... Concert ke beech mein bhi four singles release kar diye." The reference, of course, was to two couples possibly going their separate ways.

Another X user @HANKonX quipped about the couple caught on a giant screen, "The face you make when 20,000 people witness your HR violation in 4K. Live by the policy, die by the Jumbotron."

As the many jokes were shared online and the clip quickly became office and



drawing room conversation, the internet world was seeming to catch fire. An X user, Patientcex4, raised questions about the professional ethics of the "HR lady".

"The craziest thing is about the Astronomer CEO cheating scandal is it was the HR lady.



The person who would warn you against fraternizing with coworkers."

The incident also sent people sharing a scene from American comedy show "The Office" where CEO Michael Scott is seen being romantically involved with the company's HR

representative Holly Flax.

"Picture of the Astronomer CEO and the Head of HR at the weekly staff meeting," wrote @jswtreeman on X. Another X user, ShannonV1973, replaced the faces of Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet from an iconic scene from the movie "Titanic" with those of Byron and Cabot.

"They didn't see a giant iceberg ahead called Coldplay...," they wrote on the social media website. During the frenzy created by the short clip, netizens naturally looked for any social media existence of the duo but not always to its desired effects.

The social media meme fest led a man, also named Andy Byron, to declare on his LinkedIn page that he was, in fact, "NOT THE GUY FROM THE COLDPLAY GIG".





**NOLAN'S THE ODYSSEY TICKETS SELL OUT WITHIN MINUTES**

The tickets for the upcoming film *The Odyssey* from the acclaimed filmmaker Christopher Nolan were sold out in minutes after going live for the first screening shows, a year before its release. Featuring a star-studded cast comprising Matt Damon, Tom Holland, Zendaya, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Anne Hathaway and Charlize Theron, the film is slated to hit the big screen July 17, 2026.

**DENISE ACCUSES PHYPER'S OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Denise Richards has filed for a temporary restraining order against Aaron Phypers, alleging years of physical and psychological abuse. The court documents detail disturbing claims of assault, threats, and controlling behavior, including alleged choking, head slamming, and hacking of her devices.



**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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**ARIES**  
Today nostalgia tinges your mood, and this reflects in your dealings at work, where others see your softer side. You even spend carefully, seeming to be wiser regarding your savings. Ganesh sees profits for cashiers and money lenders.

**TAURUS**  
You may find yourself compromising against your will today, predicts Ganesh. Stand strong despite things going awry instead of feeling disillusioned due to poor results. Ongoing negotiations might come to a logical end and a few important decisions are likely to be delayed due to lack of proper information.

**GEMINI**  
A progressive day awaits you. However, you need to keep yourself in check when enjoying yourself. You will spend time with your friends and family and bond emotionally. Do not neglect your family members in the group activities that you take up, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Dame Luck will patronise you today. You will gain from land, house or building trade. You will get total support and co-operation from bosses and colleagues in the office. Ganesh indicates it as a very profitable day for you.

**LEO**  
Unlike Dennis or Calvin, expect your sometimes haughty and mostly naughty kids to behave 'just right' at the right time. It's not that children like to break rules, they just want to have some fun, reminds Ganesh. Keep this in mind while you go about arranging for special classes to improve their academic skills and performance.

**VIRGO**  
Ganesh foretells that you will start off on a long, arduous path to success. Some tough work will play a vital role in your progress. Don't cut corners, and your labours will pay rich dividends and you will reap due rewards. Some opportunities are best left alone as they involve too much risk.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will be more conscious about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor or by purchasing expensive cosmetics. To enhance your appearance and personality you may also go on a shopping spree for clothes.

**SCORPIO**  
Keep your guards up and be wary today, warns Ganesh. A heat seeker meant for someone else may hit you in mid-flight. But all that watchfulness will save you from embarrassment. Like those old fables, these experiences have a lesson in them, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The rewards of hard labour will be sweet, so start off by unwinding with some fun today. Ganesh sees quality time being spent with friends and family. All in all, a fun day.

**CAPRICORN**  
Numerous projects and building work pressure can keep you busy, but get done with whatever you have on hand, for Ganesh says the day has a host of recreational activities lined up for you. This will also be the right time to reach out to more people, and devour whatever knowledge or information they have to offer.

**AQUARIUS**  
Optimism rules today, and you are assured of your success. You are not usually affected by others' opinions, and that is how it should be. But you must keep in mind the inconvenience your decisions may cause people. Any stress or tension will vanish in the arms of your beloved, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
Confusion and uncertainty will linger like dark clouds in today's sky which will rain on your decision making parade and make it hard for you to find tangible solutions to problems. Steer clear of controversy and try and delay any important decisions and stick to your daily routine, advises Ganesh. If you can isolate yourself and find time to spend in solitude to mull over your problems, then you might be better equipped to make the right choices.

**VAANI rejects cancel culture**

**Mumbai:** Actor Vaani Kapoor says she does not understand the current wave of "cancel and boycott culture", which she believes is contributing to a toxic environment and restricting artistic freedom.

The actor, who will soon make her digital debut in Netflix's *Mandala Murders*, expressed her views on censorship and online hate during an interview, highlighting the impact such behaviour has on artists and society at large.

"I don't get the cancel and boycott culture," said Kapoor. "Censorship, in any form, limits an artist's freedom to take creative risks and explore new ideas."

Her remarks come in the wake of the controversy surrounding her recent film *Abir Gulaal*, a romantic drama co-starring Pakistani actor

Fawad Khan. The film, scheduled for release in May, was shelved following the Pahalgam terror attack. In the aftermath, political figures and trade bodies renewed calls to boycott Pakistani artists, ultimately preventing the film's release in India.

Kapoor, known for films like *War*, *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, and *Raid 2*, criticised the rise of "cancel and boycott" movements, which she feels have made public discourse increasingly toxic.

"This whole cancel culture — 'say one wrong thing, cancel them, boycott them' — I don't get that volatile behaviour. We're being far too harsh with one another," she said. PTI



**TAAPSEE'S career philosophy**

**Mumbai:** In a film industry often driven by formula, Taapsee Pannu has carved her own path — one marked by fearless choices and a refusal to conform. Known for taking on roles that challenge both societal norms and cinematic conventions, Taapsee recently shared insights into her career philosophy.

"It took me years to accept that conventional roles weren't meant for me. I had to make the unconventional my new normal," she said, acknowledging that only a handful of films like *Judwaa 2* or *Dunki* came her way through traditional casting.

Her belief in redefining the mainstream is evident in her diverse body of work. From the hard-hitting *Pink*, which ignited conversations around consent, to *Thappad*, where she powerfully portrayed a woman reclaiming her dignity, Taapsee has consistently chosen substance over stereotype. In *Badla*, she delivered a gripping performance in a psychological thriller, while *Naam Shabana* showcased her prowess in action — a space rarely explored by female leads.

Even with offbeat choices like *Hasseen Dill-ruba*, she's proven that complex women-centric stories can draw both acclaim and audiences. As she now prepares for *Gandhari*, a bold female-led drama directed by Devashish Makhija, Taapsee remains a fearless force reshaping what it means to be a Bollywood heroine. AGENCIES



**'Dreams without plan are illusions'**

**Mumbai:** Isha Koppikar's candid message to the youth is a compelling reminder that while dreaming big is essential, navigating reality requires grit, planning, and self-awareness. "Dreams without a plan are illusions," she says, urging young minds to blend ambition with structure. Fairy tales may end with applause, but real life begins after that—where patience, discipline, and mental strength matter most.

Reflecting on her own journey, Isha shares that success doesn't come overnight. "Rome wasn't built in a day," she reminds us, stressing the importance of passion, perseverance, and strategy. Rejections are part of the process, but instead of giving up when plans fail, she suggests, "Change the plan, not the goal."

Acknowledging the weight of societal expectations, Isha speaks openly about burnout and mental health. "It's okay to do nothing," she says, quoting Shah Rukh Khan. She encourages rest, unlearning, upgrading, and coming back stronger. For her, mental peace surpasses all external pressures.

She urges youth to define success in their own terms. "If you're willing to pay the price, go all in. If not, don't feel guilty," she says. Her final takeaway: life is temporary, so don't take it too seriously—live fully, love deeply, and believe in your potential. AGENCIES



**Vishal on his artistic goals**

**Mumbai:** Actor Vishal Jethwa, who has been nominated for Best Actor at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne, has shared what he is seeking as an artiste.

The actor has been nominated for his work in *Homebound*, directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, who is known for *Masaan*. The film earlier received a 9-minute standing ovation at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival.

Talking about his pursuit as an artiste, the actor told this news agency, "I want people to trust me more and give me more opportunities to do different kinds of cinema. Now that I have done many artistic films and have done performance-oriented work, I want to work in the commercial zone. I want to do romantic comedy".

He further mentioned, "I want to do a historical role in a classic Sanjay Leela Bhansali film. And I don't want to leave any other role that can bring my acting to people's attention. I think this is it. This is what the artiste inside me wants".

He further said, "I want to become a versatile actor. Today, I go to many places and see that I am known for good performances, I am known for my craft. Whenever people praise me, they praise my work. After that, they know who Vishal is. I am very happy about this. I take this very positively and it boosts my confidence". IANS



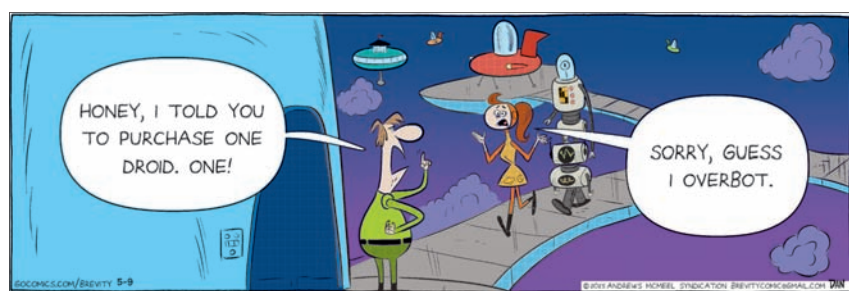
**PEANUTS**



**CALVIN AND HOBBS**

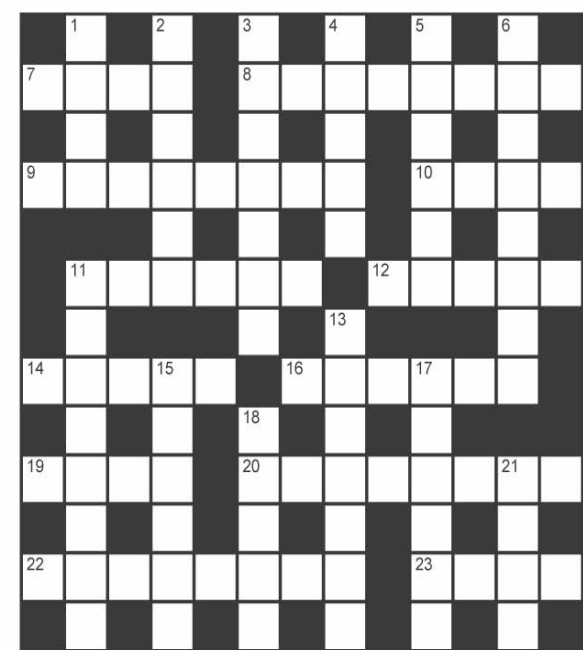


**BREVITY**



**FUN post**

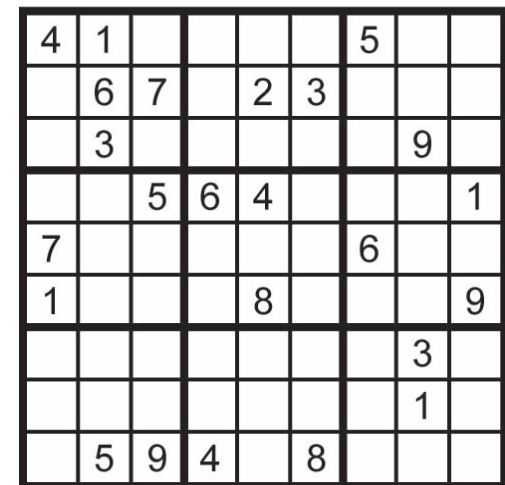
**CROSSWORD**



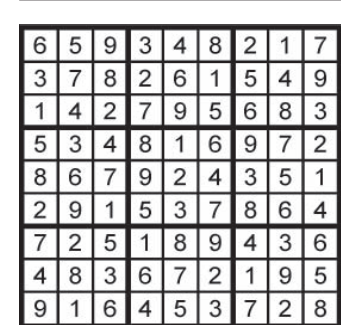
- Across**
- 7 Fuzzy fruit
  - 8 Scrutinises
  - 9 Blood feud
  - 10 Family member
  - 11 Hare's hangout
  - 12 Brown ermine
  - 14 Whitehorse locale
  - 16 Twosome
  - 19 Assist in crime
  - 20 Souvenir
  - 22 Pink web-footed wading bird
  - 23 Sicilian rumbler
- Down**
- 1 Enjoy a banquet
  - 2 Interfere
  - 3 Bookstore section
  - 4 Op-ed piece
  - 5 Take off
  - 6 Earliest known period of human culture (5,3)
  - 11 Prairie wildflower
  - 13 Ennui
  - 15 Punctual (2,4)
  - 17 Subdued colour
  - 18 Polecat
  - 21 Good-hearted

**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**

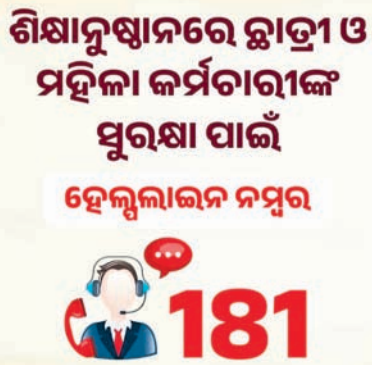


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## FM STUDENT'S DEATH

# Display 181 helpline number prominently: Govt to colleges



**The Higher Education department has also directed varsities/colleges to strictly follow POSH Act, 2013 and the guidelines issued by the UGC in this regard, and organise awareness workshops**

In addition, the Higher Education department has also directed universities and colleges to strictly follow the Sexual Harassment of Women at Work-

place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act, 2013) and the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in this regard and to organise awareness workshops related to this.

All students, teaching and non-teaching staff of the university and college, members of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) will attend the workshop and will take an oath to strictly follow the provisions of the POSH Act, 2013. The letter mentions that the details of the workshop will be provided to the Higher Education department within the next three days.

The state's School and Mass Education department Thursday had also issued a similar direction to all district education officers (DEOs) to ensure a safe environment for women employees and students, particularly girls in schools.

The DEOs were asked to implement relevant provisions under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The School and Mass Education department has also issued the same women's helpline number 181 to be displayed prominently on the campus of all schools.

**Bhubaneswar, July 18:** In the wake of the self-immolation death of a woman student over an alleged sexual harassment incident in a college in Balasore, the state government Friday made it mandatory for all higher education (HE) institutions to prominently display the Women Helpline Number-181 on the campus.

In a letter to all registrars and heads of all universities, government colleges, aided colleges and private colleges under the Higher Education department, the government directed that all must treat it as 'extremely urgent'.

## IIT Bombay felicitates Utkal varsity professor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 18:** Senior faculty member of the Utkal University's department of Geography Professor Kabir Mohan Sethy has been conferred with the prestigious National Geospatial Faculty Fellow Jury Award - 2025 by the FOSSEE GIS Project at IIT Bombay recently.

Sethy was conferred with the prestigious award during Open Source GIS Day celebration at Victor Menezes Convention Centre, IIT Bombay, in presence of distinguished dignitaries and thought leaders in geospatial technology across the globe.

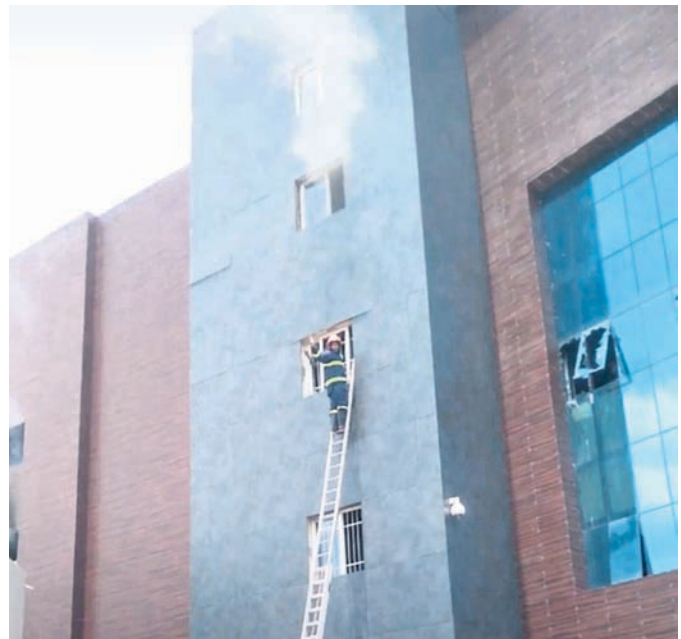
The award, instituted under the National Mission on Education through ICT (NMEICT) of the Ministry of Education, recognises Sethy's exceptional contributions to the open source geospatial ecosystem and his tireless efforts to pro-



mote GIS-based education and innovation in Odisha. His active involvement in expanding access to the national geospatial internship, fellowships and mapathons has empowered countless students and institutions across the state.

A prolific academician and an engaged public intellectual, Sethy is also the editor of the reputed peer-reviewed journal 'The Eastern Geographer', and currently serves as the president of the Utkal University Teachers' Association (UUTA).

## Fire breaks out at ITER



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 18:** As many as 65 students were rescued by fire services personnel after a major fire broke out at the Institute of Technical Education & Research (ITER), a private engineering college, located in the Jagamara area here, Friday.

Fire services officials said that the incident occurred around noon in the college auditorium, situated on the second floor of the building, while classes were in progress.

Fire service teams swiftly responded and evacuated those trapped in the multi-storey building.

Several students suffered asphyxiation after inhaling heavy smoke and were immediately rushed to the hospital in ambulances. They are currently

undergoing treatment.

The officials said 10 ambulances were used to transport the affected people to hospitals.

"A fire broke out in the auditorium of a private college in Jagamara area of Bhubaneswar. There was a fire on the second floor, which has been brought under control. Fire and Emergency Services department responded swiftly and rescued around 65 students from the third floor," the Fire and Emergency Services department said in a post on X.

Fire Services DIG Umashankar Das said the fire was reported promptly, and four fire brigade units were dispatched to the scene. "They managed to control and extinguish the fire efficiently," he said.

The exact cause of the fire is not yet known, and an investigation is expected to follow.



**AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING:** Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo lights the ceremonial lamp to inaugurate a workshop on Odisha Energy Transition Policy at a hotel in Bhubaneswar Friday.

## Congress to observe 'Shraddhanjali Divas'

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 18:** The opposition Congress Friday announced that it will observe 'Shraddhanjali Divas' across the state July 24, marking the deceased FM College girl student's Ekadasah (11th day post-death ritual).

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Bhakta Charan Das made the announcement following meeting with party's public affairs committee here. Addressing a joint press meet along with leaders of seven other political parties, Das said that July 24, marking the 11th day since the victim's death, will be observed as 'Shraddhanjali Divas' across the state to pay tribute to the young student and other women who have lost their lives due to atrocities and systemic failures.

"Our women leaders will lead the observance. We appeal to all educational institutions, including colleges and universities, to observe a two-minute silence in memory of the victims and in demand for justice," Das said.

"We also request all mothers and sisters across Odisha to observe a one-minute silent prayer at home on that day," he added. Reiterating the party's demands, Das called for the formation of a Women's Commission, a high-level judicial probe, and the resignation of the CM over the incident.

## BJD holds silent protest in City

*The Opposition party announces stir before Cuttack, Sambalpur and Berhampur RDC offices July 21 over its demand for a judicial probe into the self-immolation death of FM College student*

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 18:** Further intensifying its agitation demanding a judicial probe into the death of a woman college student in Balasore, the Opposition BJD Friday held a silent protest demonstration near Mahatma Gandhi statue here.

The party also decided to continue its stir till the government announced a court-monitored judicial probe into the incident, in which the woman student resorted to self-immolation and subsequently died after being denied justice in an alleged sexual harassment case.

"The party has decided to hold demonstrations before three revenue divisional commissioner (RDC) offices in Cuttack, Sambalpur and Berhampur July 21 to exert pressure on the government to announce a judicial probe into the incident," BJD's senior vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra told reporters.

Covering their mouths with black badges and holding placards, BJD's women, student and youth wing members staged the silent demonstration at Mahatma Gandhi Park here.

The silent demonstration continued for one hour.

The protestors also condemned alleged 'police excess-



## TALENT HUNT

The Regional Statistics Office organises 'Anvesha 2.0' quiz competition to mark the 75th year celebration of National Sample Survey, at BSNL Bhawan in Bhubaneswar Friday



es' on BJD leaders and activists when they staged the Lok Seva Bhawan gherao agitation July 16.

"Police high-handedness was evident when they fired rubber bullets, tear gas and used water cannons on the peaceful demonstration. We condemn this action of the police," said former minister and woman leader Tukuni Sahoo.

While rejecting the crime branch investigation into the woman student's death, Mishra justified the party's demand and said, "Only a court-monitored judicial inquiry could give justice to the deceased woman and her family. This is because the victim had approached all authorities, including the chief minister, the state's higher education minister, local MLA,

Balasore MP, police and civil administration, besides the college authorities to look into her complaint of sexual and mental harassment allegedly by a teacher of the FM College in Balasore."

How can a crime branch investigation headed by a DSP-level officer take action in the case where many influential persons in positions are involved, Mishra asked, adding that the regional party will continue its agitation.

The 20-year-old second-year integrated BEd student of FM College in Balasore resorted to self-immolation on campus after being denied justice July 12.

She succumbed to burn injuries at AIIMS Bhubaneswar July 14.

## Expedite devpt work in Cuttack: CM to secretaries

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 18:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has instructed departmental secretaries to expedite implementation of various developmental work in the Cuttack Parliamentary constituency area.

The Chief Minister's instruction came during a meeting with Cuttack MP Bhartruhari Mahtab at Lok Sabha Bhawan Friday.

Majhi also suggested that officials work together to transform Cuttack district and its sub-regions into a modern and prosperous model area.



During the meeting, discussions were held on setting up of a vending zone in OMP area of Cuttack City, establishing a large convention center, upgrading the Ranihat area, and constructing a park at Press Chhak.

Additionally, the integrated development of Satyabhamapur — the birthplace of Utkal Gour-

ab Madhusudan Das — was also discussed. Other topics included a drainage master plan for the CMC and CDA areas, the proposal for a barrage in the Mahanadi river, the revival of the Badamba Sugar Mill and the Bhagatpur Cotton Mill, and the construction of sub-divisional level cold storage facilities.

Present at the meeting were Development Commissioner. Anu Garg, Additional Chief Secretary Industries Department Hemant Sharma, Chief Minister's Principal Secretary Shashwat Mishra, and Municipal Administration Director Arindam Dakua, among others.

## Small efforts can yield changes for citizens: Kumar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 18:** Small, consistent efforts rooted in transparency and public service can yield significant changes for citizens, said Surendra Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, General Administration and Public Grievances department.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the second and concluding day of the National Conference on Good Governance Practices here Friday, Kumar said corruption-free and transparent governance is the true essence of good governance. "In a democratic system, people remain at the center of all administrative efforts," he said.

He also underlined the growing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in governance, noting its potential to drive innovation through data analysis and informed decision-making. AI, he said, opens new avenues for delivering citizen services more efficiently.

The event was jointly organised by the department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India, and the department of Public Administration and Public Grievances, Government of Odisha.

# GI cancers rising among middle-aged adults

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

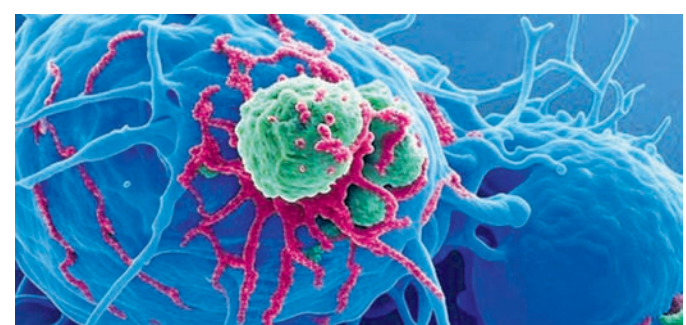
**New Delhi, July 18:** Gastrointestinal (GI) cancers are rising at alarming rates worldwide in adults younger than 50 years, according to two studies.

The first study, published in JAMA, showed that the surging cancer cases go beyond colorectal, and include gastric, oesophageal, and pancreatic.

"Colorectal cancer is the most common early-onset GI cancer worldwide, accounting for more than half of the cases, but it is not the only GI cancer that is rising in younger adults.

Unfortunately, pancreatic, gastric, and oesophageal cancers are also increasing in young people," said Dr Kimmie Ng, from Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in the US.

"The rising incidence of early-onset GI cancers is alarming and underscores the need for enhanced prevention strategies and early detection methods," Ng added. The second study, published in the British Journal of Surgery, showed that the number of newly diagnosed cases of early-onset GI cancers rose by 14.8 per cent between 2010 and 2019.



The study showed that the count of early-onset GI cases is highest in the oldest group — people aged 40 to 49 — but the rise in rates is progressively

steeper in younger groups.

People born in 1990 are twice as likely to develop colon cancer and four times as likely to develop rectal cancer compared

**Common risk factors associated with early-onset gastrointestinal cancers include modifiable lifestyle factors and alcohol consumption**

to those born in 1950, revealed the findings, also led by Ng.

The common risk factors associated with early-onset GI cancers include modifiable lifestyle factors such as obesity, poor diet, sedentary

lifestyle, smoking, and alcohol consumption.

The study also emphasise the importance of genetic testing for all patients with early-onset GI cancers to assess familial risk of cancer and to guide treatment, and to increase early screening.

"Screening adherence is absolutely critical. Each missed screening is a lost opportunity to detect cancer early when it is more treatable, or to prevent cancer altogether by identifying and removing precancerous polyps," said Dr Thejus Jayakrishnan, from Dana-Farber.



# SC warns of contempt over lack of spl teachers

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, July 18: The Supreme Court has issued a stern warning to all states and Union Territories (UTs), including Odisha, over continued non-compliance with its directives regarding appointment of special teachers for Divyang (differently-abled) students in schools. The apex court has mandated that all states and UTs file compliance affidavits within three weeks, failing which top education officials will have to personally appear before the bench August 29, 2025, and explain why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against them.

In a hearing concerning a series of petitions on the education rights of Divyang students, the apex court expressed concern over the laxity shown by several state governments. The court reiterated its earlier order dated March 7, 2025, directing states and UTs to advertise recruitment for special teachers in two leading newspapers and on the respective Education department's website by March 28, 2025.

Additionally, the apex court ordered the formation of a three-member screening committee, comprising State Disability Commissioner, Education Secretary, and an Indian



Rehabilitation Officer to assess and regularise currently working special teachers.

The matter follows a landmark ruling October 28, 2021, in which the court mandated appointment of at least one special teacher in every government school, even if a single Divyang student has enrolled. The judgement also prescribed a ratio of special teachers based on the number of such students in each school.

Despite multiple reminders from the court, the progress on the ground has remained slow. "Odisha has come under scrutiny, with reports indicating a lack of advertisement for recruitment and no steps taken to form the mandatory screening committee," said Advocate Srishti Agnihotri representing the petitioner from Odisha. Agnihotri strongly raised the issue during the proceedings.

**Odisha Inclusive Teacher Federation has voiced concern, stating that the education of over 1.5 lakh Divyang students in the state has been affected**

Odisha Inclusive Teacher Federation has also voiced concern, stating that the education of over 1.5 lakh Divyang students in the state is affected due to administrative apathy. "The repeated non-compliance shows a blatant disregard for the rights of differently-abled children. The state must act now," a representative of the federation said.

The Supreme Court has made it clear that non-compliance will not be tolerated, and any failure to submit the required affidavits by the deadline will compel the Additional Chief Secretary, Principal Secretary, or Education Secretary of the state and UT concerned to appear in court in person.

The court emphasised that affidavits must be filed at least 72 hours before the next hearing and must be signed by an officer of the Education department not below the rank of deputy secretary.



**CONGESTION:** The stretch between Vani Vihar Square and Satsang Vihar Square in Bhubaneswar witnesses a traffic snarl, Friday

PIK: BIKASH NAYAK

## Man gets life in prison for killing partner

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 18: A court in Keonjhar Friday awarded life imprisonment to a man after holding him guilty of killing his transgender partner in the district in 2021.

Keonjhar Sessions Judge GC Behera also slapped a penalty of Rs 10,000 on the convict, identified as Sadasib Samal alias Tiku, 34, of Tentulipala village under Daitari police limits in Keonjhar, Public Prosecutor (PP) Pradip Kumar Das said.

According to the case details, Sadasib 'married' Sandhyarani Kinnar of Jajpur district in 2015. They used to stay in another village under Daitari police limits and worked as labourers.

"The duo picked up a quarrel over a trivial issue October 19, 2021. Soon, a mountain was made out of a molehill and Sadasib thrashed Sandhyarani with an iron rod. Sandhyarani suffered severe head injuries and succumbed to the injuries," the PP said. Later, police arrested Sadasib and the trial began. The court convicted Sadasib after examining statements of at least eight witnesses and other exhibits.

## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION ROW

### Treat students as siblings: GM University advisory



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 18: A day after the arrest of an assistant professor for "sexual exploitation" of a female student Gangadhar Meher (GM) University in Sambalpur, the varsity authorities Friday issued an advisory to all its faculty members, asking them to treat the students as their brothers and sisters.

An assistant professor of the university was arrested Thursday for allegedly sexually exploiting a 20-year-old student of the varsity, police said. Following his arrest, the university suspended the assistant professor.

Susant Kumar Das, in-charge Vice Chancellor (VC) of GM University, said he has advised all teachers to treat the students as their brothers and sisters. The

HoDs and faculty members have been asked to counsel the students at individual-level and directly report to him in case of any kind of harassment of any student, Das said. "The teachers have been asked to maintain professional, ethical and moral values at the highest level," he said.

The students of the university staged a protest inside the varsity campus in Sambalpur during the day and also submitted a memorandum to the VC demanding a proper inquiry to identify other faculty members who might have engaged in such unethical practice, a protesting student said.

Later in the evening, the VC convened a meeting of the internal complaint committee (ICC) of the university and issued necessary instructions to the members of the panel.

## Man killed over past enmity; 2 detained

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kanas (Puri), July 18: A man was allegedly killed over a past enmity at Harashapada village under Gadisagoda police limits in Kanas block of Puri district late Thursday night, police said.

The deceased, identified as Keshab Dalei, 55, was seriously injured during a reported altercation that broke out around 10pm. Family members rushed him to Kanas community health centre (CHC), where attending physician Ballav Bhad declared him dead after an examination.

Following the incident, Gadisagoda police station inspector-in-charge (IIC) Sudhir Das, Puri Sadar sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Rabinarayan Bhanja, and a scientific team arrived at the CHC, and began a probe. Keshab's wife, Sajani Dalei, lodged a written complaint at the police station alleging that her husband was attacked and killed by a group of individuals—Babuli Biswal, Gauranga Biswal, Chaitanya Biswal, Ramesh Biswal, Niru Biswal and Dillip Biswal.

Based on the complaint, the police registered a case (No 116/2025) and detained two suspects for further questioning, the IIC confirmed.

## PRSI Bhubaneswar chapter celebrates World PR Day 2025

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 18: The Bhubaneswar chapter of Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) has organised an interactive session to celebrate World Public Relations Day (WPRD) 2025 at the Press Club of Odisha here.

Dr Debilal Mishra from Ravenshaw University, who graced the event as guest speaker Wednesday, emphasised on communication skills, behavioural skills, research skills and situational skills among PR professionals and the need to respond with common sense, presence of mind and situational wisdom.

Stating that the world is presently witnessing a decline in trust, Mishra said this year's WPRD theme – Building Bridges, Navigating Polarisation – focuses a very critical question – can public relations help rebuild what society has lost?

"When it comes to trust, three elements – positive intention, honest communication and responsible behaviour – are important. Communication creates understanding, understanding leads to trust, trust leads to acceptance and all these three aspects are very important in the field of PR," he said.

Highlighting that communication with the goal of public understanding should be the aim in PR, he said, "Once the public understands the message, we need to evaluate to know the communication effectiveness." PRSI Bhubaneswar chapter chairman Sudhi Ranjan Mishra emphasised on the significance of WPRD and the crucial role played by PR professionals in every field and organisations.

PRSI Bhubaneswar chapter secretary Krushna Chandra Mahapatra curated the event and presented vote of thanks. Several members of the Bhubaneswar chapter were felicitated on the occasion.

Distinguished PR practitioners and communication professionals were present at the event that commemorated the legacy of Ivy Lee, regarded as the father of modern PR.

## RD University workshop focuses on POSH Act

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 18: The internal complaints committee (ICC) of Rama Devi Women's University (RDWU) organised a gender sensitisation workshop at its new auditorium Friday, focusing on Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (POSH) (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

The workshop featured two technical sessions, with the first led by Uma Charan Mishra, retired judge of the Tribunal Court, Bhubaneswar. Addressing the workshop, Mishra elaborated on various legal

provisions related to workplace harassment.

"University campuses, including hostels, canteens, gardens and offices are sacred spaces. Dignity and decency must be upheld all the times," he said. Mishra urged students, especially women, to be aware of their rights. "Victims should not hesitate to report to the ICC when the face such kind of incidents. If redress is not given, they must approach the court directly to safeguard their rights," Mishra added.

He further warned against misuse of laws, stating, "Any student misusing these rights must face strict action."

## A dog's 'personality' guides its TV viewing habit: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: Dogs may have 'personalities' which guide their television viewing habits – an anxious dog might respond more to cars or a doorbell sound, while an excitable one is more likely to follow on-screen objects, a study has found.

Researchers from Auburn University, US, also found that pet dogs may perceive two-dimensional objects on the TV screen in a manner similar to those in the three-dimensional environment.

The results, published in the journal Scientific Reports, help understand a pet dog's internal, perceptual experience and may inform interventions taken towards their welfare.

"In practice, engagement with television could provide dogs with an enriching, meaningful experience," the authors wrote.

About 650 dog owners responded to surveys after observing their dogs' TV viewing habits. Aspects such as whether an owner taught their dog to watch TV or not, hours in a week spent watching TV and average time a dog paid attention while watching were surveyed.



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Aspects such as whether an owner taught their dog to watch TV or not, hours in a week spent watching TV and average time a dog paid attention while watching were surveyed

Dogs' reactions to objects on-screen – animals, non-animals and how much they were followed – were assessed. Age range of the 453 dogs finally included in the analysis was two months to 16 years old.

Dogs were found to be more likely to react to animals on-

screen than to other stimuli, with about 45 per cent of the dogs (206) always responding to dog noises such as barking and howling.

The authors wrote, "Dogs who were more excitable were more likely to exhibit behaviours suggesting an expectation that the television stimulus exists in the 3D environment (i.e., follow behaviours)."

"Furthermore, dogs who displayed more fearful tendencies were more likely to respond to the non-animal stimuli (e.g., car, doorbell)," they wrote.

The researchers said that differences in dogs' temperament could inform owners' training methods in rectifying problem behaviours towards content on television.

## Nikhil Pavan Kalyan named Odisha DCO

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 18: The Centre has appointed IAS officer Nikhil Pavan Kalyan as the Director of Census Operations (DCO) and Director of Citizen Registration (DCR) for Odisha.

Similarly, 2012-batch Karnataka cadre IAS officer M Sundar Babu has been appointed as DCO and DCR for Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Deep Shikha Sharma, a 2011-batch Indian Forest Service officer from the AGMUT cadre, will be DCO and DCR for Himachal Pradesh.

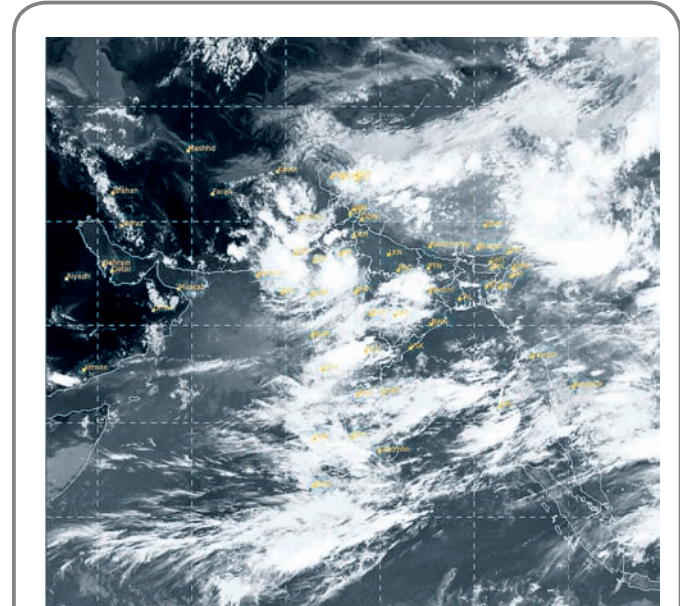
All three officers have been posted till December 31, 2025 or till further orders.

The DCOs appointed for the Census in each state will conduct the exercise in their jurisdiction under the guidelines and supervision of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India.

The 2027 Census will be the 16th decennial Census of India since 1872, when the first systematic Census was conducted throughout the country according to a uniform pattern.

This will be the eighth successive exercise conducted after Independence. The exercise could not be undertaken in 2021 because of Covid-19.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	86.15 ▲ 0.07	SENSEX	81757.73 ▼ 501.51	GOLD	₹98,024 ▲ ₹551
EURO	100.27 ▲ 0.52	NIFTY	24968.40 ▼ 143.10	SILVER	₹112,997 ▲ ₹663



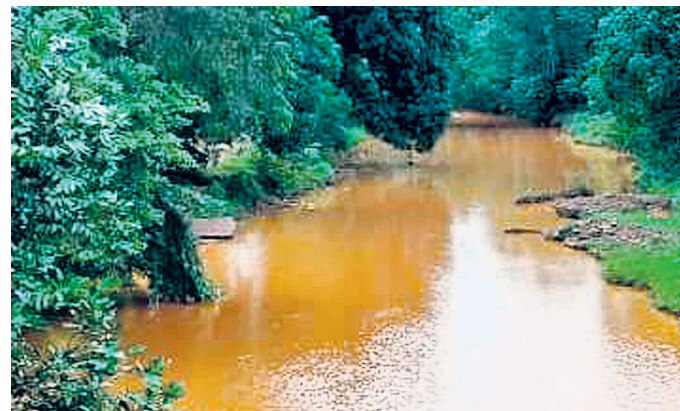
WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	35.0°	34.6°	Partly cloudy sky with possibility of moderate rain or thunderstorm.
Min Temp	26.9°	25.8°	
Humidity	85%	80%	
Rainfall	1.2 mm	Nil	

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Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-909090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Ranpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.



# Chromium levels in Sukinda groundwater 14x above safe limit



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, July 18:** Toxic levels of chromium have been found in groundwater of Sukinda mining area under Jajpur district, with concentrations up to 14 times higher than the permissible limit, a Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) report has confirmed. The investigation was conducted as per the orders of National Green Tribunal (NGT).

The CGWB collected 233 groundwater samples across the region. Of these, 37 and 28 samples taken before and after the monsoon, respectively, showed chromium levels much above the safe limit of 0.05 milligrams per litre. The highest concentration, 0.7313 mg/L, was found in a sample from Chingudipal.

The report validates complaints filed with the NGT, alleging that residents are suffering from kidney ailments and fatalities due to long-term exposure to contaminated water. The tribunal has now directed the Jajpur Collector to prepare and submit an action plan.

Despite nearly Rs 230 crore being spent on three piped water supply projects in Sukinda, many residents remain without access to clean and safe drinking water, prompting calls for permanent solutions.

Earlier, the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) had alerted the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) about the

contamination. However, remedial measures were reportedly inadequate.

The findings were submitted in June following a directive in NGT case 73/2024/EZ. A four-member team led by CGWB Regional Director BK Sahu, including scientists Mausumi Sahu, Bibhuti Bhusan Sahu and Sinos PK, conducted the study.

Both hexavalent and trivalent chromium were detected in the groundwater samples. The report recommended supplying clean drinking water to every household, testing water from new bore wells before use, and installing and monitoring effluent treatment plants.

It also highlighted that mining companies have been drawing clean water from the Brahmani River and releasing toxic effluents into the Damsala stream, causing widespread contamination of rivers, ponds and groundwater.

The report identified elevated chromium levels in Damsala Nala and noted a rise in kidney diseases in nearby areas. Villages affected include Kamarda, Masasahi, Hatisahi, Saruabil, Gurujang, Ostapal, Kuchidabanka, Kusumghut, Kalarangi and Ramsol in Sukinda block, and Krushnapur, Odisa, Barua, Mathakhokasa and Balijhati in Bhuban block of Dhenkanal district — affecting around 50,000 people.

Locals have demanded immediate action based on the CGWB report to address the crisis.

# Drunken man bites cobra; hospitalised

**BOLANGIR:** In a bizarre incident that has become the talk of the town, a man allegedly bit and chewed on a live cobra under the influence of alcohol, leading to his hospitalisation in a critical condition at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital here. The shocking episode took place Thursday in Tentulkhunti village under Tushura police limits. The man, identified as Debarchana Bhoi, was reportedly drunk when he bit the live snake. Soon after, his health condition deteriorated rapidly, and family members rushed him to Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment. Hospital superintendent Dr Manasi Panda said she would comment on the situation only after gathering more information.

# HM accused of misconduct on run for 45 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Hatadihi, July 18:** Bhagirathi Kabi, the headmaster of Brahmanikala High School in Keonjhar district, has been absconding for over 45 days following allegations of misconduct towards a female student. A case (146/2025) was registered at Nandipada police station, after which Kabi fled evading his arrest.

Despite police efforts, he remains untraceable. Following a probe, a report has been submitted to the Education department as per the directive of District Education Officer Purnachandra



Bariha, who has also sought an explanation from the accused.

Local residents alleged that the school management committee, particularly its chairman Paramananda Behera, granted extended leave to the accused to

shield him, citing close personal ties. Behera defended the leave as a "no work, no pay" arrangement and dismissed the allegations as baseless.

Kabi had filed for anticipatory bail in the Orissa High Court (Case No ABLAPL 6806/2025) May 30 but withdrew it June 20. On July 11, he reapplied, and the plea was registered July 17 (Case No. ABLAPL 8421/2025).

No significant disciplinary action has been taken against Kabi, sparking public dissatisfaction. Police suggest questioning the committee chair could aid in locating the accused.

# OMDC employees write to PM demanding salary, other rights

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, July 18:** OMDC Karmachari Sangha, an association of Orissa Mineral Development Company (OMDC) employees, has written a letter to the Prime Minister of India regarding mismanagement in OMDC, Barbil and non-payment of their salaries.

The employees alleged that due to persistent mismanagement, lack of operational vision and impact of Shah Commission's recommendations, the OMDC has been pushed into a state of crisis in spite of no liabilities. No substantial effort has been made to revive the company or restore its operation on a sustainable path, the employees said. The employees are allegedly not getting regular salaries since 2022, in spite of production and dispatch. Furthermore, they have been working without any revision of wages since the past 16 years.

"The company has generated revenue exceeding Rs 140 crore in recent months. Despite that, salaries of employees including local tribal and contractual workers have been stopped for the past nine months without any notice or valid reason, leaving hundreds of families in distress," said Debakanta Rath, secre-

**The employees are allegedly not getting regular salaries since 2022. Furthermore, they have been working without any revision of wages since the past 16 years**

tary of the OMDC Karmachari Sangha.

"Due to this, we are facing severe financial and mental distress and are forced to sell our household valuables and jewellery, take loans for family expenses, children's education and family healthcare," secretary of the OMDC Karmachari Sangha further said.

The employees requested the PM to intervene and fulfil their five charter demands including revival of OMDC operation, immediate release of pending salaries and other dues to all OMDC employees, implementation of revised pay scale as the central norms, enhanced superannuation age from 58 years to 60 years. OMDC is a mining and trading company with a proud history of over 107 years, which was declared a Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) in 2010.

"It is also a subsidiary of RINL, a profitable enterprise with over Rs 1,000 crores bank reserve and supporting thousands of direct and indirect jobs particularly among tribal population in and around the Barbil and Joda area," said Jyoti Ranjan Mohanty, president, OMDC Karmachari Sangh. Contacted, OMDC MD Vasudha Chandra Suratkal denied comments on the employees' issues.

# UGC fact-finding team begins probe

PNN & AGENCIES

**Balasure, July 18:** A four-member fact-finding team from the University Grants Commission (UGC) arrived in Balasure Friday to begin its investigation into the circumstances surrounding the attempted self-immolation and subsequent death of Soumyashree Bisi, a second-year Integrated BE student of Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College.

Soumyashree, 20, sustained over 90 per cent burn injuries in an attempted self immolation July 12 on the college campus and later succumbed to her injuries while undergoing treatment at AIIMS Bhubaneswar July 14.

The UGC team is headed by Professor Raj Kumar Mittal of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi. The other members include Professor Sushma Ya-



dav, former UGC Commission member; Neerja Gupta, Vice Chancellor of Gujarat University, Ahmedabad; and UGC Joint Secretary Asima Mangala, who is coordinating the investigation.

The team is looking into allegations of harassment that may have led to Soumyashree's

ed and are currently in judicial custody following their arrests. Meanwhile, the Crime Branch has intensified its parallel investigation into the incident. A team headed by a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) is exploring all possible angles.

Investigating officers visited Soumyashree's native village today to speak with her family and local residents.

Another team earlier examined CCTV footage from a petrol pump located approximately 500 metres from the college to determine whether fuel was purchased from the outlet between July 11 and 13, and by whom, possibly the victim or someone else.

The probe team also visited the rented house where Soumyashree had been staying and held discussions with the landlord, reports added.

# BJP youth leader held for harassing woman in Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Angul, July 18:** Police late Thursday night arrested a youth after a written complaint was lodged against him at Bantala police station July 16. A case (259/25) was registered against the accused youth, identified as Sudipta Swain of Saradhapur under Bantala police limits in Angul district, for allegedly harassing a young woman, and subsequently he was produced in court Friday.

Swain is a known youth leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a former district president of the BJP Yuva Morcha.

The complainant, Kiranmayee Sahu, 25, a resident of Sankhapur village and an employee at the State Bank of India's Angul main branch, alleged that Swain, whom she knew, repeatedly subjected her to physical and mental harassment. She alleged that he intercepted her vehicle, used vulgar language, attempted to assault her, and created disturbance outside her home on multiple occasions using weapons.

# 6 students hospitalised after vaccination; inquiry ordered

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Daringbadi, July 18:** Six students of a government-run primary school in Kandhamal district had to be hospitalised Friday as they took ill two days after getting vaccinated during a routine immunisation drive. The incident has triggered an official inquiry and sparked concern among parents.

The students—three boys and three girls—attend Patangi Government Primary School under Kirikuti panchayat in Daringbadi block. According to school sources, the children received DPT and TT vaccines Wednesday as part of a government health initiative.

While classes were under way Friday afternoon, the students reportedly developed symptoms including chest pain, headache, body ache, fever, and chills. However, they were not immediately attended to by the school authorities.

Instead, a local Anganwadi worker, Latika Pradhan, and



the children's guardians arranged an auto-rickshaw and admitted them to Simanbadi Hospital. The children were treated by Dr. Abinash Mallick and are reportedly in stable condition.

The lack of timely response from school officials drew sharp criticism from the students' families and the local community. Kandhamal District Education Officer Rajesh Swain has ordered a probe into the incident.

A team led by Additional Block Education Officer (ABEO) Gokulananda Nayak, along with officials Banamali Majhi and Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator (CRCC) Rakesh Kumar Sahu, visited

# Woman murdered over land dispute

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, July 18:** A 40-year-old woman was allegedly bludgeoned to death by her brother-in-law with a spade Friday following a longstanding land dispute, police said.

The incident occurred in PEPAGUDA village under Dhamanipanga panchayat within the jurisdiction of Kalyansinghpur police station in Rayagada district. The victim was identified as Surendri Saraka, wife of Prepakha Boimajhi.

According to police, Boimajhi had gone to work on their farmland while Surendri was preparing lunch at home. His elder brother, Latara Boimajhi, allegedly attacked her with a spade, striking her multiple times on the head. The assault is believed to be fallout of ongoing family feud over ancestral land.

Prepakha rushed home after learning of the incident and took his critically injured wife to the Kalyansinghpur Community Health Centre. She was referred to the Rayagada District Headquarters Hospital, but died en route. Doctors at the hospital later declared her brought dead.

Latara surrendered at Kalyansinghpur police station and is in custody, said Inspector-in-Charge Neelakantha Behera. Rayagada SDPO Gaurahari Sahu, IIC Behera and a scientific team visited the scene to collect evidence.

Surendri, an auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) at the local health centre, is survived by her husband and three daughters.

### EAST COAST RAILWAY

(1) Tender Notice No.SBP-ELECT-2025-T-251  
**NAME OF WORK :** AUGMENTATION, REPLACEMENT OF 11/0.4KV SUBSTATION CAPACITY COVERED UNDER ABSS NAMEL JHARSUGUDA ROAD, RAIRAKHOL, HIRAKUD, BARPALI, KESINGA, BHAWANIPATNA, HARISHANKER, KHARIAR ROAD OVER SAMBALPUR DIVISION.  
**Approx. Cost of the Work :**  
 ₹ 1,08,92,588.05, EMD: ₹ 2,04,500/-  
 (2) Tender Notice No.SBP-ELECT-2025-T-252  
**NAME OF WORK :** LIGHTNING PROTECTION SYSTEM FOR IMPORT SERVICE BUILDING LIKE DIVISIONAL RAILWAY HOSPITAL/ SAMBALPUR, DIVISIONAL RAILWAY MANAGER BUILDING, RRI BUILDING AT SAMBALPUR & TITLAGARH RUNNING ROOM AT SAMBALPUR & TITLAGARH OVER SAMBALPUR DIVISION.  
**Approx. Cost of the Work :**  
 ₹ 1,19,21,457.33, EMD: ₹ 2,09,600/-  
 Completion Period of the Work : Six months from the date of issue of LOA (for both Tenders).  
**Tender Closing Date and Time :** At 1530 hrs. of 06.08.2025 (for Sl.No.1) & At 1530 hrs. of 07.08.2025 (for Sl.No.2)  
 No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.  
 Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
**Note :** The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website fifteen (15) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/ bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering.  
**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G)/ PR-370/Q/25-26 Sambalpur**

### EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 22-SBP-TRD-OT-2025-26, Dated : 15.07.2025  
**NAME OF WORK :** TRD RELATED WORK IN CONNECTION WITH (1) REPLACEMENT OF 10 NOS. OF STEEL GIRDER BRIDGES OF SPAN 12.20 MTR BY PSC SLAB IN DEOGAN ROAD-THERUBALI SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION (2) CONSTRUCTION OF RUB/LHS IN LIEU OF TRESPASSING LOCATION NEAR KM-311/29-31 IN BISSAMCUTTACK-THERUBALI BLOCK SECTION, KM-312/29-31 IN BISSAMCUTTACK-THERUBALI BLOCK SECTION, NEAR KM-18/12-13 IN LANJIGARH ROAD -BHAWANIPATNA SECTION, NEAR KM-257/5-7 OF AMBODALA-LANJIGARH ROAD BLOCK SECTION, NEAR KM-320/35-37 OF BISSAMCUTTACK-THERUBALI BLOCK SECTION (3) CONSTRUCTION OF RUB/LHS IN LIEU OF LC-RV-230 AT KM 293/0-1 IN MUNIGUDA-BISSAMCUTTACK BLOCK SECTION, LC-RV-228 AT KM-290/33-291/01 IN MUNIGUDA-BISSAMCUTTACK BLOCK SECTION, LC-RV-220 AT KM-276/25-27 IN DOIKALLU-MUNIGUDA BLOCK SECTION, LC-RV-217 AT KM 270/10-12 IN AMBODALA-DOIKALLU BLOCK SECTION, LC-RV-205 AT KM-249/1-2 IN NORLA ROAD-LANJIGARH ROAD BLOCK SECTION IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.  
**Approx. Cost :** ₹ 24,35,581.31, EMD : ₹ 48,700/-, Completion Period : 12 Months.  
**Tender Closing Date and Time :** At 1530 Hrs. on 08.08.2025.  
 No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.  
 Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
**Note :** The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.  
**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), PR-371/Q/25-26 Sambalpur**

**Indian Bank**  
ALLAHABAD

**ZONAL OFFICE: SAMBALPUR**  
2ND FLOOR, SHYAM ARCADE,  
KHETRAJPUR, SAMBALPUR - 768003,  
e-mail: [zosambalpur@indianbank.co.in](mailto:zosambalpur@indianbank.co.in)

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**  
(See proviso to rule 6(2) & 8(6) Sale Notice for sale of property /ies under SARFAESI Act 2002)

**Sale of Immovable property/ies mortgaged to Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002)**

Whereas, the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank had taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Sec 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in the following loan accounts with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS", "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT ANY RECOURSE BASIS" for realization of Bank's dues plus interest as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies. **The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website <https://www.baanknet.com>.**

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrowers / Mortgagees	Description of the Immovable Property	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession Notice/ Outstanding Dues	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	SAMBALPUR BRANCH, Mob No.: 9777650733/ Borrower: M/s. Maa Mangala Furniture & Steel, Prop. Mr. Naresh Meher, At: Nuakata, PO: Padiabahal, Badturang, Dist.: Sambalpur, PIN-768112 / Mortgagee: Mr. Naresh Meher, Padiabahal, Bhama, Badturang, Sambalpur, Odisha-768112	All that piece and parcel of Land and Building recorded in the name of Mr. Naresh Meher, S/o: Gethal Meher, at Mouza: Padiabahal, Tahasil: Jujumura, P.S.: Sambalpur, Dist.: Sambalpur, Khata No.: 262/329, having Plot No.: 477, with Area: Ac.0.17 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari, Bounded by (as per Sale Deed) North: Plot No.: 1139, South: Plot No.: 478, East: Plot No.: 429, West: Plot No.: 478, Bounded by (as per Physical verification) North: Plot No.: 1139, South: Plot No.: 478, East: Road, West: Plot No.: 478	29.11.2024 / 25.03.2025 / ₹18,36,338/- as on 15.07.2025 + further interest, costs, other charges and expenses thereon	₹26,00,000/- / ₹2,60,000/- / ₹10,000/-

**DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION: 20.08.2025 from 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 Minutes duration**

**LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE 19.08.2025 upto 05.30 PM by online**

**Date & Time of Inspection of Properties: 01.08.2025 to 19.08.2025 between 10.00 AM to 4.00 PM (with prior appointment from bank) at their own expenses**

**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** 1) For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer to the link: <https://www.baanknet.com> Prospective bidders may also contact the Authorised Officers / Branch as mentioned in above list. 2) This is a statutory 30 days sale notice to the above mentioned borrowers/guarantors under Rule 8(6) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002. 3) This is a 30 days notice to the Borrower / Guarantor / Mortgagee of the above said loan about holding of this sale on the above mentioned date. 4) All expenses relating to the stamp duty and registration of Sale Certificate/conveyance, if any, shall be borne by the successful bidder. 5) The Authorised Officer will not be held responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the Government or any body in respect of the property under sale. 6) The Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/cancel the sale without assigning any reason thereof. It may be noted that nothing in this notice constitute or deemed to constitute any commitment or representation on the part of the bank to sell the property.

**STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.**

Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagees are hereby notified to pay the total dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/ sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest & cost.

**Place: Sambalpur, Date: 18.07.2025**

**Sd/-Authorised Officer, Indian Bank**





# Indefinite Tenure

There was a time when "superannuation" meant something. Now it's just the date you pencil in until the next extension arrives. Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan is the latest to join the Great Indian Extension Club. He was due to retire in September 2025. Not anymore. He's now staying on until August 2026. Or later.

Similarly, across states, it's become a proud tradition. In West Bengal, Chief Secretaries rarely retire. They just acquire more titles. Others? Not so fortunate.

This brings us to an uncomfortable question. What about all the highly capable officers waiting their turn? It's hard not to feel for them—the ones who played by the book, ticked all the boxes, and still didn't make it. Maybe they were too junior by a month. Or too distant from Delhi. Or just unlucky.

Meanwhile, the extended family of babus marches on. Retirement is for the lesser mortals.

### Soft power of coaching

It was only a matter of time before the parallel universe of IAS coaching centres collided messily with the real world of judicial process. Dr Vikas Divyakirti, the founder of Drishti IAS, has trained thousands to clear the world's most grueling civil services exam. Now he finds himself learning the hard way about due process. From the other side of the table.

An Ajmer court has taken cognizance of a defamation complaint against him for remarks allegedly disparaging the judiciary in a video. It is a classroom-style monologue comparing judges and babus. Perhaps his tone was flippant, but it proved to be a tripwire for legal action.

Most know Drishti as a civil services production factory. Its founder isn't merely a teacher; he's a philosopher-king for lakhs of hopefuls. Coaching gurus like him are unofficial institution-builders. They shape attitudes, internalize hierarchies, and, as this case shows, occasionally overstep.

Divyakirti may not hold a post, but his cultural capital runs deep. His words carry further than some government circulars. And when you're indirectly influencing the next generation of district collectors, it pays to measure your metaphors.

So, while the court decides the legal merits, the larger takeaway is clear: in the bureaucratic food chain, even the feeders must mind their diet. What's said in jest in a classroom can echo dangerously in a courtroom. When perception is policy, that's a lesson worth filing away.

### One ticket, one spouse, no exceptions

There are few things in life more complex than Indian family trees, except, perhaps, government rules trying to keep up with them. Enter the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), which has just updated its Leave Travel Concession (LTC) guidelines with the kind of bureaucratic poetry only sarkari memos can deliver, a fresh July 4 circular clarifying who counts as "family" for LTC purposes. And tucked away in the officialese is a gem: "not more than one wife."

You read that right. While listing those excluded from LTC benefits—parents-in-law, grandchildren of estranged daughters, and even grandparents—the circular slips in a little marital limit. Lest we leap to conclusions, this isn't some bold new policy. It's a reiteration, a clarification, a tightening of screws in response to RTIs and complaints about who's eligible to tag along on sarkari-sponsored vacations. But the phrasing is classic bureaucracy-meets-blunt-truth.

It also inadvertently opens a window into the complex web of personal laws, family arrangements, and the Centre's cautious dance around them. India allows for plural marriage under certain religious laws, but the state? The state prefers its travel parties nuclear, thank you very much. Humour aside, this is part of a larger challenge: our rules often lag behind the reality of modern relationships. Live-in partners, single parents, blended families—none of them sit neatly inside Rule 4 of the CCS (LTC) Rules, 1988.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

## WISDOM CORNER

- Die to everything of yesterday so that your mind is always fresh, always young, innocent, full of vigor and passion. JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI
- Our incomes are like our shoes; if too small, they gall and pinch us; but if too large, they cause us to stumble and to trip. JOHN LOCKE
- A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right. THOMAS PAINE

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1811: English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, who was best known for Vanity Fair (1847-48) and The History of Henry Esmond, Esq. (1852), was born in India.
- 1925: The first volume of Mein Kampf, the political manifesto written by Adolf Hitler that became the bible of Nazism in German's Third Reich, was published, and two years later the second volume appeared.
- 1976: For her performance in the uneven parallel bars at the Olympic Games in Montreal, Nadia Comaneci of Romania became the first gymnast to be awarded a perfect score of 10 in an Olympic gymnastic event.

## LOL

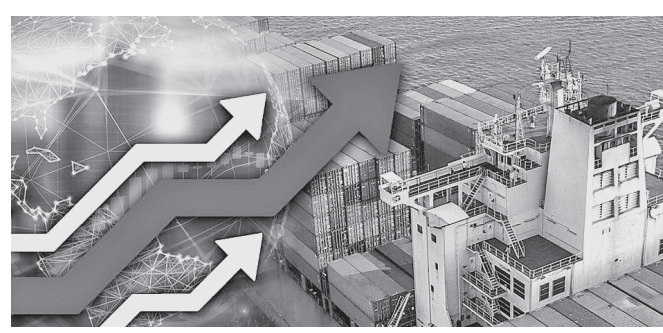
### A BRIBE FOR PROFESSOR

A professor was giving a big test one day to his students. He handed out all of the tests and went back to his desk to wait. Once the test was over, the students all handed the tests back in. The professor noticed that one of the students attached had a \$100 bill to his test with a note saying "A dollar per point." The next class the professor handed the tests back out. This student got back his test and \$56 change.



## FOCUS INDIA'S TRADE OUTLOOK

# SAILING TARIFF TROUBLES



Indian exports soared to a record \$825 billion in 2024-25, growing over 6 percent and sustaining around 5.8 percent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) over the past decade



Dhurjati Mukherjee

LABOUR-INTENSIVE SECTORS SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AND ENCOURAGED WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AND JEWELLERY

The present geopolitical situation has generated a lot of discussion and has, no doubt, been a cause for serious concern among Indian industry, not to speak of exporters. US President Donald Trump recently said he will announce a 50 per cent tariff on imported copper, an effort to boost US production of a metal critical to electric vehicles, military hardware, power grid and many consumer goods.

While tariff on copper may not have much impact on India as most of copper production is used domestically, what may affect India is his announcement of tariffs on pharmaceuticals, saying the rate for medicines could reach a hefty 200 per cent but that he would give drug makers about one year to get their act together. Though a year has been given, India has to seriously think of diversifying pharma export to other destinations. Experts are of the opinion that up to 30-40 percent, or even 50 percent tariff may be acceptable and could be absorbed by industry and partly by consumers but more than that the sector may be gravely hit.

In 2024-25, India exported \$4.56 billion worth of iron, steel, and aluminium products to the US, with key categories, including \$587.5 million in iron and steel, \$3.1 billion in articles of iron or steel and \$860 million in aluminium and related articles. "These exports are now exposed to sharply higher US tariffs, threatening the profitability of Indian producers and exporters," says founder of Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Ajay Srivastava.

Meanwhile, Indian exports soared to a record \$825 billion in 2024-25, growing over 6 percent and sustaining around

5.8 percent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) over the past decade. This indeed is a commendable performance, and optimists believe the country may be able to maintain 5 to 6 per cent growth in goods, especially non-petroleum exports while services may grow even faster at 9 to 10 percent.

It is significant to mention that with the UAE service exports have almost doubled in the 4-5 years while with Australia, it has almost tripled. Experts believe that investments are coming to India in a big way and there are collaborations for technology as well. In the space sector, India's dominance is well known while in the maritime front, the country is recognised as a ship-building destination.

Meanwhile, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal pointed out that there are plans to invest Rs 20 lakh crore in the next ten years and auto parts and sanitary ware are witnessing large investments as there is confidence in the competence of Indian companies. Undeniably, in such a situ-

ation where the geopolitical environment is far from conducive, India is moving ahead quite steadily. Some optimists pointed out that even if the US levies a 26 to 28 percent tariff on exports of Indian goods to the US, it will "not matter to India" and pointed out that the global view on the Indian market does not change even if the trade deal is rational and not unjustified.

The question that comes up here is obviously to diversify exports and set up manufacturing centres in foreign countries. It is understood that there are plans to set up pharmaceutical companies in some African countries which indeed is welcome. Another important aspect is to diversify the basket of goods that India exports. The country's technology is improving with each passing year and centres for imparting various advanced skills should be started. Experts believe with government support it would not be difficult to identify new products as also increase exports to existing markets. Importantly, labour-inten-

## SPECTRUM ECONOMY

# Merger and privatisation of banks



Gopabandhu Mohapatra

THE TALK OF PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS HAS BEEN GAINING MOMENTUM IN THE POLICY CIRCLES

India's banking underwent a major change on 19th July 1969 when the government nationalised 14 private banks, followed by six more in 1980. The Banking sector became priority sectors like agriculture, employment and rural development. PSBs became the backbone of India's economy, supporting growth, development, and financial inclusion.

The establishment of private banks in India gained momentum after economic liberalization in the 1990s. India embarked on its journey towards economic reforms of 1991, known as the 'New Economic Policy' or the LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation) policy. During 1993, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued guidelines for licensing new private sector banks, leading to the establishment of 10 new banks. These banks are Global Trust Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Bank of Punjab, IndusInd Bank, Centurion Bank, IDBI Bank, Times Bank and Development Credit Bank.

However, due to precarious state of liquidity, New Bank of India was taken over by Punjab National Bank (PNB) in

the year 1993. Again during 2001, Bank of Madurai was merged with ICICI Bank and followed by problem-ridden privately owned Global Trust Bank (GTB) merged with the public sector Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) during 2004. The government issued a directive in June 2016 asking SBI to merge the Associate Banks. SBI merged all the seven subsidiaries with itself and Bharatiya Mahila Bank was also merged with State Bank of India by April 2017.

During 2019, PSB mergers took place, when Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank were merged with Bank of Baroda, was effective from April 1 (2019). In another round of boosters for the economy, the then Finance Minister on 30th August (2019), announced amalgamation of 10 public sector banks into 4 big banks.

After the merger, State Bank of India continued to be the largest Bank in the country. Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India joined together to form the second-largest state-run bank in the country. The merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda, made

it the third-largest bank in the country. The merger of Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank created the fourth largest public sector bank. The merger of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank with Union Bank of India, created India's fifth largest PSB and Indian Bank became 7th largest after merger with Allahabad Bank.

The following six PSU banks - Bank of India (6th largest PSB), Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, UCO Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Punjab and Sind Bank remained independent and continued to operate as before. The total number of public sector banks in the country has come down from 18 to 12.

There have been no indications or announcements about further mergers of the remaining six banks. Alternatively, the talk of privatisation of public sector banks has been gaining momentum in the policy circles. The names of four banks—Central Bank of India, Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra and Indian Overseas Bank, are going rounds as potential candidates that could be privatized. The Government

has also expressed that the banking sector will continue to be recognized as a strategic sector on the issue of privatisation.

IDBI Bank, originally the Industrial Development Bank of India, which was established in 1964, later transformed into a commercial bank in 2004. Subsequently in 2019, LIC acquired 51% controlling stake, making it a subsidiary of LIC. Indian government and LIC are now planning to divest a 60.72% stake by September 2025 to categorise it as a private sector bank.

PSBs after nationalization have historically played a crucial role in providing banking services to remote and backward communities. If PSBs are privatised, there is a risk that as private banks they may focus more on profitable urban areas, neglecting rural and underserved regions. Privatisation of banks in India is a tightrope walk, striking the right balance between efficiency, social responsibility and financial stability, which is essential.

The writer is a retired banker

## Lowering voting age

Sir, The British government has said that it will allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote. The plan has been described as Britain's largest expansion of voting rights in decades. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government announced the initiative in a policy paper, saying the move would address declining trust in British institutions and renew democracy. Allowing 16-year-olds to vote was part of the Labour Party's official platform, on which it won last year's general election. It is a brazen attempt by the Labour Party, whose unpopularity is scaring it into making major constitutional changes without consultation. Voter turnout in the UK has been dropping. Polls have shown that younger Britons skew left, which could benefit Labour. However, some recent polling has also found growing support among young people for Reform UK, a new right-wing populist party led by Nigel Farage. The reason quoted by the leader is all humbug. This would make all immigrants eligible to vote even before they become mature enough to understand politics. This will sound the death knell for British democracy. This should not be allowed.

Jayanthy Subramaniam, MUMBAI

## Unanswered questions

Sir, The judicial report on the Bengaluru stadium stampede rightly blames event organisers and the police, but glaring questions remain unanswered. Are the police not part of the government? If the Deputy Chief Minister received the RCB team at the airport and both he and the Chief Minister participated in the felicitation, how can they now claim ignorance? Their public presence lent official legitimacy to the event. This sent a clear message to the police: "Go ahead—it's government-backed." So how can the police alone be held responsible for not halting an "unauthorised" event? The tragedy, which claimed 11 lives, was not just a failure of logistics but of political judgment. The Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister's visible enthusiasm played a key role in enabling this chaos. It is deeply unjust to scapegoat officials without questioning the top leadership's role. Accountability must begin at the top, not stop at the bottom.

Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI

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



# 12-YEAR EXILE FOR 29 TRIBAL FAMILIES ENDS

The Kodarvi families had migrated to Palanpur and Surat over a decade ago, leaving behind their homes, land, and memories. The 'Chadotaru' custom, which had led to disputes, made life in the village untenable for them. For years, they lived as outsiders, yearning to return but bound by fear and tradition

**Banaskantha, July 18:** Twelve years ago, around 300 members of 29 Kodarvi families were forced to live in exile, forced out of their homeland in Mota Pipodra village of Danta taluka in Banaskantha district of Gujarat, because of a tribal custom of 'Chadotaru' - a tradition rooted in vengeance. That suffering came to an end today, with Gujarat Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi leading the drive in rehabilitating these tribal families in their native village. During this historic occasion, a prayer ceremony and seed sowing were also conducted on the land, symbolising a

new beginning. The Minister will also interact with the families to discuss their rehabilitation plans and distribute educational materials and ration kits. Years ago, these tribal families had to migrate from their ancestral land to regions like Palanpur and Surat with a heavy heart. July 17 marked a memorable moment for the dignified return and resettlement of these families in their ancestral village. Gujarat Minister Harsh Sanghavi, speaking to IANS on the occasion, said, "Today, in Mota Pipodra village of Danta taluka, 29 families with 300 people who had to leave the village 14 years ago due to old social customs, were respectf-



ly rehabilitated." He also thanked Banaskantha police for prioritising social policing and empathy over strict legalities, making this a

historic and emotional day for the region. The Banaskantha Police, in coordination with the District Inspector of Land Records, sur-

**This is not just about bringing people back to their village; it is about healing old wounds and building a future of harmony. We believe no tribal family should be left displaced due to outdated customs. Development and dialogue will always triumph over discord**

HARSH SANGHAVI | GUJARAT MINISTER

veyed approximately 8.5 hectares of land belonging to these families, cleared the overgrown and barren land, and made it cultivable again. The 'Chadotaru' custom, which prompted the migration, had deeply affected the Kodarvi community.

Banaskantha Police gathered details of the displaced families, contacted them, and initiated meetings with the village panchayat and elders of both communities to ensure peace and reconciliation. As part of the resettlement efforts, two houses have already been constructed, and with support from the district administration, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, and various social organisations, the remaining 27 families will soon be provided with housing and other essential amenities. For the Kodarvi families, this homecoming is nothing short of a miracle—a chance to reclaim their roots, their land, and their dignity.

## TECH-DRIVEN JUSTICE

**More than 53K prisoners produced through video conferencing in 6 months**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, July 18:** Gujarat is emerging as a leader in integrating technology into the justice system, with over 53,672 prisoners presented before courts via video conferencing between January and June 2025, a significant rise from the 40,633 presented in the same period last year. This marks a 41 per cent adoption rate of video conferencing in judicial hearings, up from 29 per cent in 2024, showing the state's growing reliance on digital tools for swift and efficient justice delivery. Currently, 83 video conferencing units are operational across Gujarat's prisons, including 23 software-based systems. The initiative, implemented under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi, is a joint effort between Gujarat Police, the jail department, and the judiciary. It aims to reduce the burden on police personnel, save time and costs, and strengthen the overall criminal justice infrastructure. The Gujarat High Court played a pivotal role in this transformation by installing 1,100 video conferencing systems in courts statewide in 2022. As a result, prisoner transport costs have dropped, court procedures have accelerated, and administrative efficiency has improved, allowing detained police staff to be redeployed to critical duties. Officials say this shift has not only eased logistical challenges but also ensured quicker trials and faster justice for victims, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's broader vision of a tech-enabled, responsive justice system. Under the guidance of DGP Vikas Sahay and Prisons DG KLN Rao, the state continues to expand this model, reinforcing Gujarat's status as a front-runner in digital judicial reform. Gujarat's legal system functions within the Indian judiciary's three-tier framework, comprising over 370 district and subordinate courts and the Gujarat High Court in Ahmedabad, which has jurisdiction over the entire state. The High Court, established in 1960, handles over 80,000 cases annually and plays a key role in supervising lower courts and interpreting constitutional matters.

# Myanmar refugees in Mizoram return home

After a military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, refugees, including women and children from the neighbouring country, started coming to Mizoram seeking shelter, and now their numbers have increased to around 35,000



**Aizawl, July 18:** Nearly 3,000 Myanmar refugees, including women and children, who earlier this month crossed the unfenced International Border and took shelter in Mizoram during the armed clashes between two armed ethnic groups, have returned to their villages in the neighbouring country, officials said. Around 4,653 refugees, including children and women, from Myanmar had taken shelter in the border villages of Zokhawthar, Saikhumpha, and Vaiphai in eastern Mizoram's Champhai district, following a series of armed clashes between the Chin National Defence Force (CNDF) and Chinland Defence Force (CDF), both anti-military ethnic groups, who were engaged in fierce gun battles between June 28 and July 5 over control of the territory. The refugees came from

nearly 3,000 Myanmar nationals, who had fled into India's Mizoram due to recent armed clashes in Myanmar's Chin State, have now returned to their native villages following a temporary ceasefire among rival rebel groups. Myanmar nationals intending to reach India and take shelter in Mizoram are allowed to enter by the security forces on humanitarian grounds

three villages of Chin state of Myanmar -- Khawmawi, Rihkawdar and Lianhna -- in the first and second week of July. Sources along Mizoram's border with Myanmar said that the situation along the India-Myanmar border is relatively calm now leading to the return of the refugees to their villages. According to the officials, of the 4,653 Myanmar refugees, 3,867 had sheltered in Zokhawthar, 786 in Vaphai and Saikhumpha villages in Champhai district.

Around 500 refugees had taken shelter in relief camps while the remaining were accommodated in the relatives' and friends' houses, the official said. The Assam Rifles have been guarding the India-Myanmar border and recently ramped up their security to prevent smuggling of drugs and various contrabands and cross-border movement of militants. The refugees, mostly Chin tribes, have almost full ethnic and cultural similarity with the majority Mizos of Mizoram, now sheltered in camps, in most of the 11 districts in the northeastern state, which has an unfenced 510-km border with Myanmar. Meanwhile, the Mizoram government recently decided to collect biometrics and biographic data of Myanmar refugees taking shelter in the northeastern state after a military coup in the neighbouring country in February 2021. A Mizoram Home Department official had said that the large-scale exercise to collect biometric and demographic data of around 35,000 Myanmar refugees would start by end of this month. The biometric exercise would be conducted using the Foreigner Identification Portal and would be carried out in all 11 districts of the state. According to the official, Rs 38 lakh was earmarked for the exercise, and the expenditure would be borne by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). He said that the biometric and demographic data collection exercise would be done by the concerned district administrations under the supervision of Deputy Commissioners.

## Mizoram incurs ₹900cr losses due to African Swine Fever outbreak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Aizawl, July 18:** Mizoram has incurred losses to the tune of Rs 963.14 crore due to the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF), which resulted in the deaths of 68,172 pigs since 2021, the state's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department said Friday. More than Rs 14 crore has been disbursed to compensate farmers, whose pigs were culled during 2021-2023 to prevent the spread of the disease, it said. The ASF outbreak was first reported at Lungsen village in south Mizoram's Lunglei district near the Bangladesh border March 21, 2021, according to data available with the department. Between January and July 17 this year, 5,871 pigs have died due to ASF and 1,942 animals were culled, it said. The northeastern state suffered losses to the tune of Rs 66.51 crore due to ASF outbreak till July 16 in 2025, the data showed. In 2024, the total losses amounted to around Rs 336.4 crore, Rs 334.14 crore in 2021 and Rs 210 crore in 2022. The outbreak, which is now considered endemic, has affected 10,468 families since 2021, it said. A total of 51,301 pigs have been culled during the period.



## PIONEER PROJECT

# Gujarat unveils tribal genome sequencing



*The Tribal Genome Sequencing Project is an initiative to sequence the genomes of 2,000 people belonging to tribal communities in a bid to tackle inherited diseases*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, July 18:** The Gujarat government has launched a genome sequencing project for improving healthcare for tribal communities, an exercise spanning 17 districts of the state, a minister announced Thursday. With this, Gujarat has become the first state in India to launch a tribal genome sequencing project, which will seek to understand genetic health risks among adivasi groups and create a database, said an official release. The announcement about

the project was made by Tribal Development Minister Kuber Dindor after holding a meeting with experts and other stakeholders in Gandhinagar. The project will be implemented by Gandhinagar-based Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRS). Under the scientific initiative, genome sequencing of 2,000 individuals from various tribal communities from 17 districts of Gujarat (out of total 33) will be carried out, said the release. Dindor noted the project will prove to be a new milestone towards a prosperous and healthy future of tribal communities. Through the pioneering project, it will be possible to identify genetic markers of innate immunity, cancer and other hereditary diseases such as sickle cell anaemia and thalassemia among tribal groups. In addition, their health profile will be linked to basic health services, said the release.

# Lianpui menhirs declared 'monument of national importance'

This is the second megalith site in Mizoram to receive national recognition after 'Kawtchhuah Ropui' or Great Entranceway in Vangchhia village, which hosts over 170 engraved menhirs and is located about 20 km south of Lianpui village

**Aizawl, July 18:** Ancient carved memorial stones, also known as menhirs, found at a village in east Mizoram's Champhai district, have been officially declared a 'monument of national importance' by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), officials said Friday. Lianpui village near the Myanmar border is home to the memorial stones, locally known as Lungphun Ropui. The village is situated 54 km southeast of Champhai town near the India-Myanmar border, and it is famous for its rich repository of ancient artefacts. The formal notification declaring the Lianpui menhirs as a monument of national importance was issued by the Ministry of Culture July 14, following years of research and inspection, they said. These antiquarian artefacts include 114 intricately carved



memorial stones, anthropic holes, petroglyphs, Y-shaped wooden posts and ancient pathways. The upright memorial stones at Lianpui bear detailed carvings of human figures, birds, animals, mithun heads, gongs, lizards, and other cultural motifs reflecting the cultural practices of the Mizos before the advent of Christianity, according to officials. The largest of such memorial stones measures 1.87 metres in height and 1.37 metres in width, they said. These menhirs are arranged

into eight alignments, with four oriented north-south and the other four east-west, they said. Lianpui village was named after Lusei chief Lianpui, who reportedly established the village in the 18th century CE. Mizoram's lone Rajya Sabha member K Vanlalvena, had informed the Parliament in March that the ASI, after a thorough inspection by experts, had found Lianpui village to possess significant archaeological heritage worthy of national importance. According to officials, the process of declaring the site of national importance began in February 2021 with the publication of a preliminary notification in the Gazette of India, marking the commencement of a statutory procedure required under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, for declaring protected monuments. On July 7 this year, ASI Director (Monuments) AMV

Subramanyam visited Lianpui village and confirmed that final steps were underway to declare the megalith site of national importance. With no objections filed, the Centre finalised the notification declaring Lungphun Ropui a monument of national importance and brought the site under national protection. Meanwhile, residents of Lianpui village expressed happiness and thanked the Art and Culture minister C Lalsawivunga and K Vanlalvena for their efforts towards receiving the ASI's tag. Art and culture department director Carol VLMS Dawngimi also expressed happiness due to the national recognition and dedicated the achievement to the hard work of many individuals, particularly former convener of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Mizoram chapter P Rohmingthanga.

# Mizoram Oil Tanker Drivers' Association to halt service due to 'poor' road situation



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Aizawl, July 18:** Mizoram Oil Tanker Drivers' Association (MOTDA) said it will cease operations from Saturday due to the dilapidated condition of the national highway linking the state with Assam. A statement issued by MOTDA on Friday said that the Sairang-Kawnpui stretch of the national highway is so "badly damaged that it is no longer safe for oil tankers to ply on it." "The MOTDA decides not to ply on the national highway starting from July 19 till it is repaired for trucks to travel. We apologise to the public for any inconvenience that will be caused by the strike," the statement said. NH-306 is the primary life-line of Mizoram, as all supplies come through this national

highway from outside the state. It connects Mizoram's capital Aizawl with Silchar town. A portion of the national highway is called NH-6. The Sairang-Kawnpui sector of NH-6, which was worst affected by the monsoon, was recently taken over by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) from the state government. NHIDCL executive director (P) Virender Kumar Jakhar told PTI that the repairing work of the stretch began July 10 and is ongoing. He said that the repair work could not be expedited due to heavy traffic and rain. The Mizoram Truck Drivers Association (MTDA) has recently filed a PIL at the Aizawl bench of the Gauhati High Court over the dilapidated condition of NH-6/306.





**When disputes arise between two states regarding river water issues, the central government invites the CMs of both states for discussions. We respect cooperative federalism. Even in the case of the Banakacharla project, the central government called both the chief ministers for discussions**  
G KISHAN REDDY | UNION COAL MINISTER

**HC ALLOWS PROCESSIONS AHEAD OF TMC'S MARTYRS' DAY RALLY JULY 21**

The Calcutta High Court Friday allowed processions ahead of the Trinamool Congress' Martyrs' Day rally July 21 in Kolkata, except between 8 am and 11 am. The court directed that all processions within Kolkata police jurisdiction will be allowed till 8 am on that day, and an hour will be granted thereafter for settling the crowd near Victoria House at Esplanade in the heart of the city



**of the day quote**

The DMK lacks genuine concern for the fishermen. What steps did the DMK take to retrieve the island when it shared power with the Congress during the UPA regime

EDAPPADI K PALANISWAMI | AIADMK GEN SECY

Our police had apprehended the accused within four hours of the incident. NIA took over the case in the night... but even after all this time, they have failed to make any headway

ASHOK GEHLOT | CONG LEADER

The question is whether Mamata Banerjee likes Bengalis or only Muslim-Bengalis. My answer is only Muslim-Bengalis

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

**Govt: All parties on board to impeach Justice Varma**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 18:** All political parties are on board on the move to impeach Justice Yashwant Varma, from whose residence here burnt wads of currency notes were found, the government said Friday, paving the way for a motion on this matter during the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament.

A fire incident at Justice Varma's Delhi residence in March this year, when he was a judge of the Delhi High Court, had led to the discovery of sacks of half-burnt cash in the outhouse.

Justice Varma was subsequently repatriated to the Allahabad High Court but no judicial work was assigned to him. An in-house probe ordered by then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna has indicted the judge.

While Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said he was coordinating with leaders of different parties on the motion to ensure that a unified stand of the Parliament comes out, the Congress, the principal opposition party, has said all its MPs will support the motion against Justice Varma. Rijiju also said there should not be any politics over the impeachment move. The Monsoon session of Parliament is scheduled to start from July 21.

"I have spoken to all the senior leaders of different political parties. I will also get in touch with some of the single-MP parties because I do not want to leave out any member. So it becomes a unified stand of the Parliament of India," Rijiju told PTI Videos in an exclusive interview.

"Corruption in the judiciary is an extremely sensitive and serious matter, because the judiciary is where people get justice. If there is corruption in the judiciary, it is a serious



**Though Justice Varma has denied any wrongdoing, the inquiry panel has concluded that the judge and his family members had covert or active control over the storeroom, where the cash was found, proving his misconduct serious enough to seek his removal**

concern for everybody. That is why the motion for the removal of Justice Yashwant Varma is to be signed by all the political parties," he said.

Rijiju said when it comes to corruption in the judiciary, "we have to stand together. There cannot be any partisan attitude and it should not be made a political issue."

The minister asserted that it is not the government but members of Parliament cutting across party lines, including from the Congress, who are in favour of moving a motion to remove Justice Varma. He was happy that the Congress has

understood the severity of the issue, as no party can be seen standing in support of a "corrupt" judge.

Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said bringing an impeachment motion in Parliament is entirely a matter of the MPs and the government is nowhere in the picture.

Meghwal, in an interview to PTI, said the in-house committee set up by the then CJI Sanjiv Khanna to look into the allegations against Justice Varma, arising from a cash-discovery row, has already submitted its report.

Meghwal said if Justice Varma does not agree with the report and approaches the Supreme Court or a high court, it is his prerogative.

The Congress stand on supporting the motion against Justice Varma was outlined by party general secretary Jairam Ramesh. Ramesh told PTI that the then CJI Sanjiv Khanna had "forced our hand" by writing to the President and the Prime Minister.

He also stressed that the Opposition would strongly push for action against Justice Shekhar Yadav, against whom 55 Opposition MPs have moved an impeachment notice in the Rajya Sabha last December for allegedly delivering a hate speech.

**LAND-FOR-JOBS SCAM**

**SC refuses to stay trial court proceedings against Lalu Yadav**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 18:** The Supreme Court Friday refused to stay the trial court proceedings against former Bihar chief minister and RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav in the CBI's land-for-jobs case.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh asked the Delhi High Court to expedite hearing on his plea for quashing of the CBI FIR.

The top court also granted exemption from appearance to Yadav before trial court in the case noting his health condition.

"The appeal being against interim order we are not inclined to interfere except by observing that at the time of disposing the final matter the observation made in the impugned order will not stand in the way."

"Considering the fact and circumstances of the case, we are inclined to pass further order to the effect that he may not be personally present and therefore his appearance is dispensed with. We request the High Court to expedite the hearing," the bench said.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the RJD supremo, sought a stay on proceedings saying there was no prior approval obtained by the CBI under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for the CBI, countered it saying sanction was not required in the present case.

Sibal sought the stay pointing out no prior approval with the CBI under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act (prior sanction before initiating investigation against public servant). On May 29, the Delhi High Court said there were no compelling reason to stay the proceedings.

**Curbs after clash: Maha Assembly bans visitors**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 18:** A day after supporters of two MLAs clashed in the Maharashtra Vidhan Bhavan premises, assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar Friday said visitors will not be allowed in the legislature complex during the session, and only ministers, legislators, their personal secretaries and officials will get entry.

Making this announcement in the Lower House of the state legislature, he also said that an ethics committee, empowered to disqualify members, will be formed within a week.

The incident occurred at 5.45 pm on the ground floor of the legislature building here, Narwekar said, adding that he has sought a report from the chief security officer of Vidhan Bhavan.

"Visitors will not be allowed inside the Vidhan Bhavan during the session. Only ministers, legislators, their officially-designated personal secretaries and government officials will be allowed during that period," he said.

Ministers will not be allowed to hold official meetings and meet visitors in the legislature complex during the session. They will have to conduct their official briefings and meetings in Mantralaya, the state secretariat, he said.

MLAs will be held accountable for the conduct of persons accompanying them, Narwekar added. Both Padalkar and Awhad expressed regret in the House over the scuffle between their supporters.

Speaker Narwekar said Nitin Deshmukh and Sarjerao (Rishikesh) Takle, associates of Awhad and Padalkar, respectively, who were involved in the scuffle and detained by the security personnel of the state legislature, will face breach of privilege of the House.

Deshmukh said he was a supporter of Awhad, while Takle said he was a cousin of MLA



**Supporters of NCP (SP) MLA Jitendra Awhad and BJP legislator Gopichand Padalkar Thursday scame to blows inside the Maharashtra legislature complex, a day after a heated exchange between the two lawmakers**

Padalkar, he added. Both persons were arrested and criminal offences were filed against them along with additional six to seven unknown persons. Both entered the legislature complex with the MLAs and without authorised passes, the speaker said.

"The concerned mlas will now be responsible for the conduct of persons accompanying them. It is their responsibility to maintain decorum of the legislature inside and outside," Narwekar said.

Narwekar also announced to set up of an ethics committee on the lines of that in Parliament. The ethics committee is empowered to disqualify the members, he said.

When the speaker asked Awhad to express regret over the scuffle, the NCP (SP) MLA said the concerned worker had not come to the assembly complex with him. Awhad said he received abusive messages on his phone.

**SHORT TAKES**

**Ex-Congress MP Kuldeep Sharma held**

**Port Blair:** The CID Friday arrested former Congress MP Kuldeep Rai Sharma in connection with the Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank Ltd (ANSCLB) loan irregularities case, police said. Sharma, who formerly served as the chairman of ANSCLB, was arrested from a private hospital in Port Blair where he was admitted due to health issues. "Sharma was admitted to Dr Ritika's Diagnostic Solutions Multi-Speciality Hospital with some health issues. In the morning, a team of officers went to the private hospital and arrested him," a senior police officer said, adding further legal steps will be determined by the court.

**Five killed in road accident**

**Hyderabad:** Five people died when the car they were travelling in hit the rear of the lorry on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) of Hyderabad in the early hours of Friday, police said. While three died on the spot, two others succumbed in a hospital. Over-speeding is believed to be the cause of the accident, they said.

**Rahul meets AK Antony**

**Thiruvananthapuram/Kollam:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Friday visited party veteran and former Defence Minister AK Antony at his residence in the Kerala capital, party sources said. Gandhi's meeting with Antony, who quit active parliamentary politics in 2022 after his term as Rajya Sabha MP ended and shifted base to his home state of Kerala, was described as a courtesy call by the party. The Congress veteran has been a member of the Kerala Legislative Assembly since 1970 and became Chief Minister of the state thrice in 1977, 1995 and 2001.

**15 injured as building collapses**

**Mumbai:** Fifteen people including three senior citizens were injured as a two-storey chawl or tenement building collapsed in Bandra area here in the early hours of Friday, a civic official said. Chawl number 37 in Bharat Nagar area in Bandra (East) collapsed around 5.56 am. Of those injured, 12 were admitted to the municipal Bhabha Hospital while the search and rescue operation was still going on, the official said. Barring a man who left hospital against doctors' advice, all injured persons were undergoing treatment and were in stable condition, the official said.

**Raj Thackeray warns of shutting down schools**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thane, July 18:** MNS chief Raj Thackeray Friday warned Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis that if Hindi was made compulsory for Classes 1 to 5 in the state, "we will not hesitate to shut down schools".

Speaking at a rally at Mira Bhayandar in the district, he asked the people of Maharashtra to stay alert and foil any plan of the government to impose Hindi.

Earlier, workers of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) had roughed up a local shop-keeper after he allegedly refused to speak in Marathi. The BJP-led government recently withdrew two orders making Hindi mandatory in primary schools following

**HINDI ROW**

strong opposition.

Fadnavis, however, asserted Thursday that the government will certainly introduce the three-language formula, but whether Hindi should be taught from Class 1 or Class 5 will be decided by the committee appointed to study the issue. Raj Thackeray, in his speech, dared Fadnavis to impose Hindi. "When they tried it once, we had shut down shops, and now we will not hesitate to shut down schools if Hindi is imposed (from Class 1 to 5)," he said. It was unfortunate that the Chief Minister of Maharashtra was striving to make Hindi compulsory, the MNS chief said.



A protestor being detained by police personnel during a protest by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (AVBP) demanding the resignation of General Education Minister V Sivankutty over the tragic electrocution death of a 13-year-old student at his school in Kollam district, in Thiruvananthapuram

**'Unrecognised political parties' income spiked 223% in '22-23'**

**The analysis showed that both annual audit and contribution reports of a significant 73.26 per cent or 205 of the total registered unrecognised parties are not available in the public domain for FY 2022-23**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 18:** The declared incomes of registered unrecognised political parties witnessed a 223 per cent spike in 2022-23 and more than 73 per cent of these parties failed to publicly disclose their financial records, according to poll rights body the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

Its report analysed the status of submission of annual reports of a total of 739 (26.74 per cent) registered unrecognised parties across 22 states in India, whose either audit or contribution

reports were available on the websites of respective state CEOs for the 2022-23 financial year.

The maximum number of registered unrecognised parties, whose statements are available are in Uttar Pradesh, followed by Delhi and Bihar, given that these states have the highest number of registered unrecognised political parties.

States with zero reporting included Punjab (73 registered unrecognised parties), Uttarakhand (40) and Goa (12) are among the top three states where both audit and contri-



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

butions reports of none of the registered unrecognised parties are available on the official websites.

Among the 739 registered unrecognised parties analysed in this report, both audit and contribution reports are available for 501 parties across 20 states. This is a mere 18.13 per cent of the total number of registered unrecognised parties.

The top compliant states are

Gujarat (37.89 per cent), Bihar (36.41 per cent), Delhi (30 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (23.25 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (21.74 per cent) where either statement is available for the aforementioned percentages of total registered unrecognised parties in the state.

Gujarat (30.53 per cent), Delhi (21.67 per cent) and Bihar (18.48 per cent) demonstrate relatively higher levels of compliance compared to the national average in terms of the availability of both reports of registered unrecognised parties in the public domain. Out of the top 10, five parties (50 per cent) are from Gujarat, indicating a concentration of unrecognised parties with high declared incomes in this state.

Gujarat parties collectively reported Rs 1158.115 crore in total income - over 70 per cent of the top 10 parties' income. The highest income was declared by Bharatiya National Janta Dal, Rs 576.458 crore. Donations above Rs 20,000 account for a large share of total donations - e.g. New India United Party shows 100 per cent of donations as large donations (Rs 407.45 crore).

Many of the top earners were formed after 2015, reflecting a trend of newer parties rapidly mobilizing funds. These include Satyawadi Rakshak Party (2022), Jan Man Party (2021), Jan Sewak Kranti Party (2021) and New India United Party (2018) the ADR said.

Bharatiya National Janata Dal declared the highest total income of Rs 957.4454 crore (31.76 per cent of total) between the FY 2019-20 to 2023-24. The party witnessed a major jump in FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23, the report said.

Satyawadi Rakshak Party declared the second highest income of Rs 416.2337 crore, with sharp growth in FY 2022-23 (Rs 85.6779) and a massive Rs 330.5558 crore in FY 2023-24.

Gujarat-based parties alone account for 73.22 per cent (Rs 1158.1154 crore) of the top 10 parties' declared income of Rs 1581.7517 crore. Some parties report no or very less income in earlier years, but then suddenly report large sums in one or two fiscal years.





The war was fought in the middle of Sri Lanka. Even today, the people of India respect that system with the same dignity, with the same pride and with the same feeling of gratitude

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

MONSOON RAINS 9 PC ABOVE NORMAL

India has received nine per cent more rainfall than normal so far this monsoon season, but the rain has not been evenly spread across the country.



of the day quote

I congratulate (Mallikarjun) Kharge and Rahul (Gandhi) who raised the issue with the PM and a meeting of all leaders will take place on (July) 19 evening in which this issue will be raised again

We will not tolerate forced implementation of a three-language policy in Maharashtra

To stop online gaming, the Centre has to step in. Only the Centre can frame a law to regulate it.

POST OF THE DAY

Bureaucracy A govt officer went out late night on the road. He woke up a sleeping beggar, "Have you eaten anything?"

SHORT TAKES

Narcotics officer, middleman held New Delhi: The CBI has arrested an officer of the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) for allegedly demanding a bribe of ₹1 crore from a farmer to prevent him from being implicated in a criminal case, officials Friday said.

Six killed in house collapse Banda (UP): Six people, including four children, died after being buried under debris in separate incidents of house collapse due to heavy rains in various districts across Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh, officials said Friday.

6 Naxals killed in encounter Narayanpur: Six Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh Friday, police said. A gunfight broke out in the afternoon in the forest of Abujmad region when joint teams of security forces were out on an anti-Naxal operation following inputs about the presence of ultras, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P told PTI.

INDIA bloc to hold online meet today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: INDIA bloc parties will hold an online meeting Saturday to reach a consensus on issues that they would raise to corner the government during Parliament's Monsoon Session and convey a message of unity, but AAP has distanced itself from the Opposition grouping.

The meeting comes right before the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which starts Monday. It will be held after a long gap since the INDIA bloc parties jointly deliberated the country's political situation.

Congress general secretary in-charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, said the INDIA bloc is united and its prominent leaders will hold deliberations online Saturday and meet in Delhi later.

Late Thursday night, the Congress announced that a meeting of the leaders of the INDIA bloc parties will be held online Saturday evening to discuss the prevailing political situation of the country.

The leaders would deliberate on a host of key issues, including the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar, the demand for a discussion on the Pahalgam attack, and Operation Sindoor.

US President Donald Trump's claims of bringing about a halt in hostilities between India and Pakistan, and the push to impeach Justice Yashwant Varma, embroiled in a row following the discovery of burnt wads of currency at his residence after a fire inci-



In a jolt to Opposition unity ahead of the Parliament session, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) distanced itself from the INDIA bloc, saying it is not part of the alliance anymore and questioned the Congress' role in leading it

dent, are also likely to feature in the discussions.

However, in a jolt to opposition unity ahead of the Parliament session, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) distanced itself from the INDIA bloc, saying it is not part of the alliance anymore and questioned the Congress' role in leading it.

"The AAP has cleared its stand. The INDIA bloc was for the (2024) Lok Sabha polls. We fought the Delhi and Haryana Assembly polls on our own. We are going to fight the Bihar election solo. We fought the bypolls in Punjab and Gujarat all by ourselves. The AAP is not part of the INDIA (bloc)," Singh told PTI Videos.

The Arvind Kejriwal-led party contested the Lok Sabha seats in Delhi and Haryana during the 2024 general elections in alliance with the Congress. Slamming the Congress, Singh questioned its role in leading the Opposition bloc.

"It is not a child's play. Did they hold any meeting after the

Lok Sabha polls? Was there any initiative to expand the INDIA bloc? Sometimes they criticise Akhilesh Yadav, sometimes Uddhav Thackeray and sometimes Mamata Banerjee. The INDIA bloc should have been united. The Congress is the biggest party of the bloc. But did it play a role (in ensuring Opposition unity)?" he asked.

Meanwhile, the TMC said that initially it was to skip the INDIA bloc meeting that was to be hosted in Delhi, but now that it is going to be held online, Abhishek Banerjee will attend it.

On the INDIA bloc's online meeting, Ramesh said all the prominent leaders of the bloc will attend the Saturday meeting. "People would not be able to come to Delhi Saturday due to different programmes. It has been decided that we will have an online meeting before the Parliament session. After that, we will meet in Delhi also," he said and asserted that the INDIA bloc was united.

LIQUOR SCAM CASE ED arrests Baghel's son

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, July 18: The Enforcement Directorate Friday arrested Chaitanya Baghel, son of senior Congress leader and former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, in an alleged liquor scam-linked money laundering case, official sources said.

According to Bhupesh Baghel, the action came on Chaitanya's birthday. The junior Baghel was later sent to five-day ED remand by a court. Chaitanya was taken into custody by the ED under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) following fresh early morning raids conducted at his residence in Bhilai town of Durg district. The father-son duo reside at the same house.

Bhupesh Baghel alleged that central agencies were being misused to target Opposition leaders, but he trusted the judiciary and would cooperate with them. Congress MLAs boycotted the proceedings of the state Assembly for the day as a mark of protest against the arrest and accused the agency of trying to harass the Opposition.

A heavy posse of police personnel was seen outside the house of the Baghels, even as some party supporters gathered and protested the ED action. ED sources said Chaitanya was arrested under Section 19 of the anti-money laundering law as he was allegedly not cooperating during the searches that came about following receipt of fresh evidence in the case.

The alleged liquor scam in the central Indian state, according to the ED, was orchestrated between 2019 and 2022 when Chhattisgarh was governed by the Bhupesh Baghel-led Congress government. Assets worth about ₹205 crore of various accused have been attached by the ED as part of this investigation so far, according to the agency.

Hoax bomb threats at over 45 Delhi schools

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: More than 45 schools and three colleges in Delhi received bomb threats via emails Friday, triggering panic among the students and their parents. The threats, however, later turned out to be hoaxes.

This was the fourth day this week that schools and colleges in the national capital were targets of bomb threats. Although the threats turned out to be hoaxes, many panic-gripped parents chose not to send their children to school Friday.

"I did not send my son (to school) today. It is not that we are panicking, but after repeated incidents, it feels safer to wait things out," said Parmita Sharma, a parent whose child studies at Richmond School, Paschim Vihar. Many parents had to rush to schools, leaving their work mid-way, after receiving communication about the threat.

"Even if there is nothing, we cannot ignore the fear these messages cause. Parents can't focus on work, and the children feel tense too. It is an emotional rollercoaster," a father of a student of St Thomas Schools in Dwarka said. Police, along with bomb disposal and dog squads, and the fire department, rushed to the schools and colleges as these institutions started receiving threats via email.

The premises were evacuated and thoroughly searched, following which the threats were declared as hoaxes as nothing suspicious was found, an official said. Indraprastha (IP) College for Women, Hindu College and Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) in North Delhi received bomb threats. Schools in multiple districts of Delhi also received bomb threats.

In Dwarka, as many as six schools -- St Thomas School, G D Goenka School, DIS Edge

50 Schools in B'lore receive bomb threat

Bangalore: Nearly 50 schools in Bangalore Friday morning received bomb threat, which turned out to be a hoax, police said. A single, identical email with the subject 'Bombs inside the school' was sent to nearly 50 email ids of various schools at 7.24 am from the user, roadkill333@atomicmail.io, they said. The sender claimed to have placed several explosive devices within the classrooms of the respective schools, police said. "Hello. I am writing to let you know that I have placed several explosive devices (Trinitrotoluene) within school classrooms. The explosives are skillfully hidden, in black plastic bags," it stated.

School, Modern International School, Dwarka International School and La Petite Montessori -- informed police about the threats. Subsequently, rescue operations were initiated in these schools. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Ankit Singh said nothing suspicious had been found so far in these schools.

In Rohini, MRG School in Sector 3, Delhi Public School, Sovereign Public School and Heritage Public School in Sector 24, Delhi International Public School in Sector 9, Abhinav Public School in Sector 3 and Heritage School were evacuated after they contacted the police over the threat.

Schools in Pitampura (Maxfort Junior School and Guru Nanak School) and Paschim Vihar (Richmond School and Doon Public School), too, experienced tense hours following the receipt of these emails.

According to police, one of the threatening emails read, "Hello, I am writing to let you know that I have placed several explosive devices (Trinitrotoluene) within school classrooms."

At rally in Bihar, PM sounds poll bugle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Motihari (Bihar), July 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday sounded the poll bugle in Bihar, where Assembly elections are due shortly, calling for "an NDA government, once again", which would protect the state from the "evil intentions" of the RJD-Congress combine.

Modi also accused the RJD of seizing land from the poor on the false promise of jobs, in an apparent reference to the 'land-for-jobs' scam, and asserted that the 'viksit' (developed) Bihar is key for eastern India's development. Addressing a rally in Motihari town, the headquarters of East Champaran district, he said, "The people of the state had broken the shackles of RJD", but the younger generation "must be made aware of the despair in which Bihar was mired two decades ago". He also made an indirect reference to the land for jobs scam, on a



day when the Supreme Court turned down a plea by RJD supremo Lalu Prasad, a former railway minister and the prime accused, for a stay on trial.

In contrast, he pointed out, "lakhs of youths in Bihar" have got loans under the Mudra Yojana promoting self-employment, and his government has also launched other schemes like ₹15,000 assistance to youth getting their first jobs in the private sector.

"The scheme will be rolled out on August 1 and the Centre will be bearing an expenditure of ₹1 lakh crore for the same," said Modi.

SNIPPETS

3 elephants run over by train in Bengal's Jhargram

Jhargram: Three elephants, including two calves, were run over by an express train near Banstala railway station in West Bengal's Paschim Midnapore district, police said Friday. The incident, which took place Thursday night, occurred when an elephant herd that probably came from Jharkhand's Dalma forest was traversing, they said. The three pachyderms were mowed on the tracks by a speeding Janshatadi Express on the Kharagpur-Tatanagar section, a police officer said. It was difficult to go near the carcasses for some time, as the herd of 30 elephants was passing through the area, he said. Chief Conservator of Forests S Kulandaive told PTI it was an unfortunate incident, and despite informing the Railways "three hours before the movement of the herd", the tragedy could not be averted.

Student's body found hanging in IIT Kharagpur hostel room

Kolkata: A fourth-year B Tech student was found hanging in his hostel room at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur campus Friday, the fourth such unnatural death case at the campus since January this year. Ritam Mondal (21), a student of mechanical engineering, was found hanging in his room at Rajendra Prasad (RP) Hall hostel building, an institute official told PTI. The student, who hailed from Kolkata, had retired to his room after dinner Thursday night, and there was no abnormality in his behaviour, one of his hostel mates said. The IIT KGP official said that, as repeated knocks on his door did not evoke any response, in the morning, police at the outpost on the campus, accompanied by institute security guards, broke open the door and found him hanging. An FIR has been lodged by the institute, and all cooperation is being extended to the investigators.

SC nixes PIL against appointment of BPSC chairperson

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a PIL challenging the appointment of Bihar Public Service Commission chairperson Parmar Ravi Manubhai after observing that an FIR against him was closed. The top court, however, was critical of PIL and asked the petitioner not to file such bereft of facts petitions. "If you are filing a PIL then you have to give your life to it. Please do not go behind this publicity business, it will ruin you... you should have read the facts properly," a bench comprising Justices P S Narasimha and Atul S Chandurkar said. After it was informed about an FIR against Manubhai, the bench asked, "What happened to the FIR?" "It was closed," the lawyer said. The bench, after hearing the counsel for the state government and the BPSC chairperson, held the PIL ought to be rejected. The bench initially imposed a cost of ₹10,000 on petitioner Brajesh Singh. It later removed the cost part from the order after considering the petitioner's apology.

States should decide on releasing terminally ill prisoners: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: The Supreme Court Friday said prison rules were applicable individually to states, which ought to frame common rules on the release of terminally ill prisoners.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta reserved its order on a plea of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) seeking the release of a group of either terminally ill prisoners or those above 70 from jail.

The Centre claimed of framing a standard operating procedure (SoP) on the issue and the same being on record. The bench, however, noted, "Ultimately, the prison rules are all

applicable individually to the states. All states have to come out with a common prison rules wherein this consideration for terminally ill for their release, that has to be there."

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, said the government was concerned about terminally ill prisoners and all states and union territories were advised in the SoP to take steps for the effective management of such inmates.

The government said the states or union territories might also consider the release of such prisoners as a part of "general amnesty".

The bench, flagging the "possibility of misuse", observed



The Centre claimed of framing a standard operating procedure (SoP) on the issue and the same being on record

The bench, however, noted, "Ultimately, the prison rules are all applicable individually to the states. All states have to come out with a common prison rules wherein this consideration for terminally ill for their release, that has to be there"

there had to be guidelines on the standard to treat such prisoners and who were entitled to the benefit of the release.

The petitioner's counsel referred to NALSA's SoP and said, "We have defined who should be

considered under the terminally ill category and it would be certified by the medical officer of the jail concerned."

The bench then remarked, "Identification is different, but the certification is where

the catch is. There is a huge possibility of misuse." Bhati said the Centre's SoP contemplates a medical board to be set up for this.

The law officer, who was also appearing for the Delhi govern-

ment, said there was a prisoner who was suffering from asthma since 1985. The NALSA's counsel said in Kerala, there was a 94-year-old prisoner.

The bench also deliberated on prisoners awarded life imprisonment till their natural lives.

"There are end number of convicts in the Jaipur Central Jail who have been convicted for bomb blast cases... One of them probably expired a few months back. He was a doctor, 104 years," Justice Mehta observed. The Uttar Pradesh counsel said the state, in its policy framed in 2018, incorporated certain specific clauses for the terminally ill, providing for a medical board to be set up.



# international



We do not seek conflict. Taiwan will not provoke a confrontation with China

BI-KHIM HSIAO | VICE PRESIDENT, TAIWAN

## NK BANS FOREIGN TOURISTS TO NEWLY OPENED BEACH RESORT

North Korea is suspending the entry of foreign tourists to a recently opened mega beach resort, a move that dims prospects for the complex that leader Kim Jong Un hailed it as "one of the greatest successes this year". DPR Korea Tour, a website run by North Korea's tourism authorities, said in a notice Wednesday that the eastern coastal Wonsan-Kalma tourist complex "is temporarily not receiving foreign tourists"



## Over 160 held, curfew extended in B'desh; death toll rises to 5

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, July 18: Over 160 people were arrested and curfew extended Friday in Gopalganj, the home town of Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, even as the death toll in Wednesday's violence rose to five.

According to police, 164 people were arrested and a manhunt is underway for hundreds others with even Navy and Coast Guard men in boats patrolling rivers and canals to nab the suspects involved in the violence in Gopalganj, about 160 kilometres southwest of Dhaka.

Four people were killed in clashes over a National Citizen Party (NCP) rally, which turned into a virtual battlefield as hundreds of supporters of Rahman's daughter and deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina clashed with police, ahead of the planned march of the student-led party.

"The local hospital referred the critically injured bullet-hit Ramjan Munsif to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died today," an editor of a local newspaper said, requesting anonymity.

Police confirmed that the arrested and scores of unnamed others were accused of allegedly attacking and setting a police vehicle on fire and physically assaulting several officers Wednesday.

The Bangladesh Army, in a statement, said it used force in self-defence during Wednesday's clashes in Gopalganj after coming under attack from "a group of unruly people."

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement said a group of people carried out "organised acts of violence" in Gopalganj Sadar centring on a public rally called as part of a political party's month-long programme.

"As the situation quickly escalated, both the Bangladesh Army and local police intervened and were able to bring the situation under control," the ISPR said.

Meanwhile, the curfew that was originally for 22 hours since Wednesday evening, was extended till Saturday 6 am, police added.

# EU's Russia sanctions aim for effective oil price cap

REUTERS

Brussels, July 18: The European Union Friday agreed an 18th package of sanctions against Russia over its war in Ukraine, including measures aimed at dealing further blows to the Russian oil and energy industry.

The EU will set a moving price cap on Russian crude at 15% below its average market price, EU diplomats said, aiming to improve on a largely ineffective \$60 cap that the Group of Seven major economies have tried to impose since December 2022.

"The EU just approved one of its strongest sanctions packages against Russia to date," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on X.

"We will keep raising the



costs, so stopping the aggression becomes the only path forward for Moscow."

### G7 PRICE CAP INEFFECTIVE SO FAR

Yet Russia has so far managed to sell most of its oil - the lifeblood of its state finances -

above the previous price cap as the current mechanism makes it unclear who must police its implementation. Traders doubt the new EU sanctions will significantly disrupt Russian oil exports.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov shrugged off the EU

move, which would, at current prices, aim to cap the price of Russian crude at roughly \$47.60 per barrel. Benchmark Brent futures rose marginally Friday to about \$70.

"We have repeatedly said that we consider such unilateral restrictions illegal, we oppose them," Peskov told reporters.

"But at the same time, of course, we have already acquired a certain immunity from sanctions, we have adapted to life under sanctions."

The package also bans transactions related to Russia's Nord Stream gas pipelines under the Baltic Sea, and with Russia's financial sector.

Kallas said 105 ships in Russia's "shadow fleet", the term used by Western officials for ships that Moscow uses to

circumvent oil sanctions, had been blacklisted, along with Chinese banks that "enable sanctions evasion", which she did not name.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the decision "essential and timely" as Russia intensifies its air war on Ukrainian cities and villages.

### US DECLINES TO BACK EU-ROPE ON PRICE CAP

The European Union and Britain have been pushing to lower the G7 cap for the last two months after a fall in oil futures made the level of \$60 a barrel largely irrelevant.

But the United States has resisted, leaving the EU to move forward on its own, but with only limited power to enforce the measure, analysts and oil traders say.

# US declares TRF as terror group

India says the designation of TRF is a 'timely and important' step and that it has consistently emphasised the need for global cooperation in the fight against terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/New Delhi, July 18: The US has designated The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of the Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba, as a "foreign terrorist organization" over the Pahalgam terror attack, a move welcomed by India as a "timely and important" step reflecting strong counter-terror cooperation between the two countries.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, announcing the punitive measure, said it was part of Washington's commitment to countering terrorism and enforcing President Trump's call for justice for the Pahalgam attack.

Rubio said the US State Department is adding the TRF as a designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT).

The TRF, a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) "front and proxy", claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam attack which killed 26 civilians, he said, adding it was "the deadliest attack on civilians in India since the 2008 Mumbai attack conducted by the LeT." "TRF has also claimed responsibility for several attacks against Indian security forces, including most recently in 2024," Rubio said.

"These actions taken by the Department of State demonstrates the Trump Administration's commitment to protecting our national security interests, countering terror-



TRF initially took responsibility for April attack in Pahalgam before denying it

Pahalgam attack sparked latest hostilities between India and Pakistan

CEASEFIRE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN WAS REACHED MAY 10

INDIA BLAMED PAKISTAN, ISLAMABAD DENIED RESPONSIBILITY

ism, and enforcing President Trump's call for justice for the Pahalgam attack," he added.

In New Delhi, India welcomed the decision by the US with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar describing it as a "strong affirmation" of India-US counter-terror cooperation.

India said the designation of TRF is a "timely and important" step and that it has consistently emphasised the need for global cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India remains committed to a "policy of zero tolerance" towards terrorism and will continue to work closely with its international partners to ensure that terrorist organisations and their proxies are held accountable.

"The government of India welcomes the decision of the United States Department of State to designate TRF as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and as a Specially Desig-

nated Global Terrorist (SDGT). We acknowledge and appreciate the leadership of Secretary of State Marco Rubio in this regard," it said.

In a social media post, Jaishankar specially complimented US Secretary of State Marco Rubio for designating the LeT proxy.

"Appreciate @SecRubio and @StateDept for designating TRF—a Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) proxy—as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). It claimed responsibility for the April 22 Pahalgam attack," he said.

The MEA said India welcomes the decision of the US State Department to designate TRF as an FTO and SDGT.

The TRF, a "proxy" of the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation LeT, has been involved in numerous terror-related activities, including the heinous attack on civilians in Pahalgam for which it twice claimed responsibility, the MEA said in its statement.

# Israel agrees to allow Syrian troops limited access to Sweida

REUTERS

Beirut/Jerusalem, July 18: Israel has agreed to allow limited access by Syrian forces into the Sweida area of southern Syria for the next two days, an Israeli official said Friday after days of bloodshed in and around Syria's Druze city of Sweida.

"In light of the ongoing instability in southwest Syria, Israel has agreed to allow limited entry of the (Syrian) internal security forces into Sweida district for the next 48 hours," the official, who declined to be named, told reporters.

Syria's interior ministry spokesperson said Friday that government forces were not preparing to redeploy to Sweida Province, the state news agency reported.

Syrian troops withdrew from Sweida after a truce was announced Wednesday, but clashes resumed late Thursday between fighters from Bedouin tribes and the Druze, who are part of a religious minority in Syria that has followers in Lebanon and Israel.

The clashes in parts of Sweida province continued into Friday, according to residents of Sweida



and Ryan Marouf, the head of local news outlet Sweida24.

Damascus had this week deployed troops to Sweida, which is adjacent to territory controlled by Israel, to try to quell some of the most intense internal fighting in Syria since the interim government took power late last year.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights monitoring group said it had documented 254 dead in four days of fighting, among them medical personnel, women and children.

### UN AGENCIES' CONCERNS

The head of the UN human rights office urged Syria's interim authorities to ensure accountability justice for what it said are credible reports of widespread rights violations during the fighting, including summary executions and kidnappings, the office said in a statement.

# Austrian skydiver, who jumped from edge of space, dies in paragliding crash

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Italy, July 18: Felix Baumgartner, the Austrian daredevil who famously jumped from the edge of the Earth's atmosphere in a 2012 stunt, died Thursday in Italy, the emergency services there announced.

A senior official with the emergency services in the Marches region, northern Italy, confirmed his death to AFP.

Police at Porto Sant'Elpidio, on Italy's Adriatic coast, had identified Baumgartner, he



said. While he was not able to say what had been the cause of death, a report in the Il Corri-

ere della Sera daily said that Baumgartner had lost control of his paraglider after suffering a malaise.

He landed in the swimming pool of a holiday residence at Porto Sant'Elpidio, slightly injuring a young woman.

The accident happened at around 4:00 pm, the paper reported.

Baumgartner's dramatic 2012 jump from a capsule more than 39 kilometres (24 miles) above the Earth was the most spectacular of a string of record-breaking stunts.

# ChatGPT will soon shop online, make presentations

A growing number of tech companies, including OpenAI backer Microsoft Corp. and rival Anthropic, are focusing on agents, or AI software that can complete multistep tasks for users with minimal supervision

AGENCIES

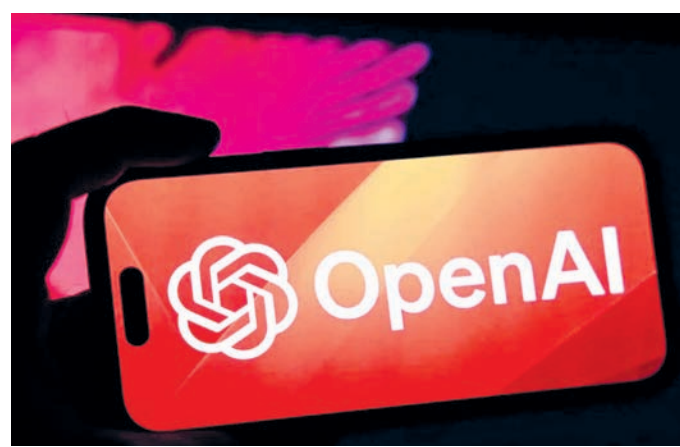
San Francisco, July 18: OpenAI is rolling out new options for chatbot ChatGPT to carry out a variety of increasingly complicated tasks on a user's behalf, part of its push to bring so-called AI agents to the mainstream, Bloomberg reported.

The ChatGPT agent is designed to streamline personal and professional projects, such

as planning a meal and ordering ingredients for it online, or creating a slideshow for a business meeting. The tool works through OpenAI's flagship chatbot and combines the capabilities of two AI services it rolled out earlier this year: Operator, which can browse, type and click on the internet much in the way a human would; and Deep Research, which is meant to handle time-consuming online research.

The San Francisco-based company said the agent features will be available immediately to its paid Pro, Plus and Team subscribers, with plans to release it later this summer to other enterprise and education customers. Some of the details of the software were previously reported by the Information.

A growing number of tech companies, including OpenAI



backer Microsoft Corp. and rival Anthropic, are focusing on agents, or AI software that can complete multistep tasks for users with minimal supervision. OpenAI Chief Executive Officer Sam Altman previously said agents will be "the next gi-

ant breakthrough" for AI. The hope is that such tools can save users time and thereby live up to the long-held promise that AI will make people more productive. For now, however, the software can still be frustrating and slow.

In a demonstration of the ChatGPT agent this week, Neel Ajarapu, OpenAI's product manager for the software, gave the chatbot a detailed prompt: Browse Etsy for vintage-style lamps that are under a couple hundred dollars and available with free shipping, then put the best-looking items in his online shopping cart and provide a URL for each one.

OpenAI has also experimented with using the tool to make presentations and PowerPoint slides. Ajarapu said, though he cautioned it's more for making "very early rough drafts" of presentations people can then refine. Microsoft, the company that makes PowerPoint, also offers AI tools to help professionals draft presentations.

Ajarapu said the AI model that powers the tool uses a computer and web browser to

complete assignments. It can also take in feedback from the user while a task is underway and alter its approach, he said. While users are accustomed to chatting in nearly real time with ChatGPT, it can take much longer - several minutes at least - for the chatbot to complete agent-like tasks.

AI agents present new safety and security risks, given the potential for AI to make mistakes or be misused by bad actors. The company said ChatGPT agent is meant to turn down some tasks, including those related to finances or legal advice. There are also a number of actions the tool will seek permission for before carrying out, including making purchases, the company said. For some tasks, such as writing emails, the service will require a user to supervise it.





There is a requirement of enhanced global cooperation to technology transfer, R&D funding, and skills development  
**M RAJESHWAR RAO** | RBI DEPUTY GOVERNOR

## TAX DEPT ENABLES ONLINE UTILITY FOR ITR-2 FILING

Individuals and HUFs having taxable capital gains income can now start filing income tax returns ITR-2 for financial year 2024-25. ITR-2 is filed by individuals and Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs) who have income from capital gains, but do not have earnings from business or profession. Last month, the tax department had enabled the online utility for filing ITR-1 and 4, which are simpler forms that cater to small and medium taxpayers



## of the day quote

Andhra Pradesh is now evolving into the beating heart of India's green hydrogen ecosystem with an ambitious target of 1 MMT green hydrogen per annum by 2030  
**PEMMASANI CHANDRA SHEKHAR** | MINISTER OF STATE, COMMUNICATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The prevailing imbalance between dollar demand and supply further exacerbates the downward pressure on the rupee. From a technical perspective, the spot USD/INR pair is having support at 85.75 and encounters resistance at 86.30  
**DILIP PARMAR** | RESEARCH ANALYST, HDFC SECURITIES

This lifted sentiment in safe-haven assets, helping Co-mex gold reclaim the \$ 3,350-mark  
**JATEEN TRIVEDI** | VP RESEARCH ANALYST, COMMODITY AND CURRENCY, LKP SECURITIES

# SEBI to review MF categorisation norms

Markets regulator SEBI proposed to review the categorisation of mutual fund schemes in a bid to improve clarity and address the issue of overlap in portfolios of schemes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 18:** Markets regulator Security Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Friday proposed to review the categorisation of mutual fund schemes in a bid to improve clarity and address the issue of overlap in portfolios of schemes.

The proposal came after SEBI noted a significant overlap of portfolios in some schemes and felt the necessity to introduce clear limits to the industry to avoid schemes with similar portfolios.

In its consultation paper, it suggested that mutual funds should be permitted to offer both Value and Contra funds, subject to the condition that no more than 50 per cent of the schemes' portfolios would overlap at any point in time.

The overlap condition should be monitored at the time of New Fund Offer (NFO) deployment and subsequently on a semi-annual basis using month-end portfolios.

In case of a higher-than-permitted overlap, the Asset Management Company (AMC) should rebalance the portfolios within 30 business days. An extension of up to an additional 30 business days may be obtained from the Investment Committee (IC) of the AMC, with the reasons for granting the additional days properly recorded and maintained.

"If the deviation persists beyond this period, investors of both the schemes shall be given an exit option without any exit load," SEBI proposed.

The regulator proposed that mutual funds should be permitted to invest the residual



portions of their portfolios in equity, debt (including money market instruments), gold and silver, Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) under the equity category schemes.

It also recommended changes in the nomenclature of debt schemes to enhance investor understanding. It proposed that the term 'Duration' be replaced with 'Term' for better clarity. Additionally, the 'Low Duration Fund' should be renamed as 'Ultra Short to Short Term Fund' to better reflect the investment objective, and the name of each debt scheme should indicate the fund's duration, such as Overnight Fund (1 Day) or Medium Term Fund (3 to 4 years).

The regulator further proposed that mutual funds should be allowed to launch sectoral debt funds, provided that no more than 60 per cent of the portfolio in a sectoral debt scheme overlaps with any other sectoral debt or debt category scheme.

This move should also ensure sufficient availability of invest-

ment-grade papers within the chosen sectors.

Moreover, mutual funds should be permitted to invest the residual portion of their debt category schemes in REITs and InvITs, except for those with shorter durations, such as Overnight Fund, Liquid Fund, Ultra-Short Duration Fund, Low Duration Fund, and Money Market Fund, subject to regulatory limits applicable to this asset class.

In terms of arbitrage funds, SEBI suggested that such schemes should be allowed to take exposure in debt instruments only through government securities with a maturity of less than one year and in repos backed by government bonds. For equity savings schemes, the regulator proposed that net equity exposure and arbitrage exposure should be mandated between 15 per cent and 40 per cent.

With respect to hybrid category schemes, mutual funds should be allowed to invest the residual portion in REITs and InvITs, except in Dynamic Asset Allocation and Arbitrage Funds.

## Delhi HC reserves order on Celebi's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 18:** The Delhi high court Friday reserved its order on a plea filed by Turkish-based Celebi company, namely Celebi Ground Handling India Private Limited, against Centre's decision to revoke its security clearance.

A different bench of the high court July 7 dismissed the pleas by Turkish-based firms - Celebi Airport Services India Pvt Ltd and Celebi Delhi Cargo Terminal Management India Pvt Ltd, challenging the revocation of their security clearance by aviation watchdog Bureau of Civil Aviation Safety (BCAS) May 15, saying there are compelling national security considerations involved.

Justice Tejas Karia Friday reserved the order after company's lawyer submitted that the petition was filed on July 4 after a coordinate bench reserved its judgement in a similar case involving the associated companies.

The counsel said Friday that the July 7 verdict directly applied to the present case as well, and urged the judge to pass a similar order. BCAS revoked the security clearance; days after Turkey backed Pakistan and condemned India's strikes on terror camps in the neighbouring country.

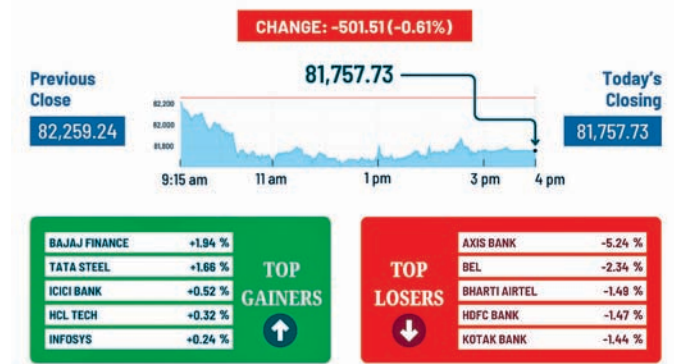
The court July 7 underlined the necessity to eliminate the possibility of espionage or dual use of logistics capabilities which would be highly detrimental to the security of the country, especially in the event of an external conflict.



# Sensex tanks 501 pts, Nifty closes below 25K

**BSE SENSEX**

JULY 18, 2025



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 18:** Benchmark Sensex tanked 501 points while Nifty closed below the 25,000 mark Friday due to selling in banking shares after muted quarterly earnings and foreign fund outflows.

30-share BSE Sensex declined by 501.51 points or 0.61 per cent to settle at 81,757.73. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 143.05 points or 0.57 per cent to close at a month's low of 24,968.40.

Among Sensex firms, Axis Bank tumbled the most by 5.24 per cent after it reported a 3 per cent dip in its June quarter consolidated net profit at ₹6,243.72 crore, impacted by the implementation of changes in non-performing assets and loan upgrade policy.

Following the decline in bank stocks, the BSE Bankex ended 1.33 per cent lower at 62,741.65.

Bharat Electronics, Bharti Airtel, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan and Eternal were also among the laggards from the Sensex pack.

However, Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, HCL Tech and Infosys were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,694.31 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.64 per cent and mid-cap index dipped 0.62 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, capital goods dropped 1.50 per cent, followed by bankex (1.33 per cent), industrials (1.08 per cent), telecommunication (0.99 per cent), power (0.90 per cent) and consumer durables (0.90 per cent).

Metal, services and BSE Focused IT ended higher.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark tumbled 742.74 points or 0.90 per cent, and the Nifty declined by 181.45 points or 0.72 per cent.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225 index settled lower, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended in positive territory.

European markets were trading with gains. US markets ended higher Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.92 per cent to \$70.16 a barrel.

## Q1 RESULTS

### JSW Steel sees growth

**New Delhi:** JSW Steel Friday reported an over two-fold jump in its consolidated net profit at ₹2,209 crore in April-June quarter, aided by lower expenses. It had registered a net profit of ₹867 crore in the first quarter of the preceding fiscal year 2024-25, the company said in a filing. Total income rose marginally by 0.9 per cent to ₹43,497 crore in the reporting quarter from ₹43,107 crore in the April-June period a year ago. However, JSW Steel brought down its expenses to ₹40,325 crore from ₹41,715 crore in the year-ago quarter.

### Bandhan Bank profit down

**New Delhi:** Bandhan Bank Friday reported 65 per cent decline in net profit at ₹372 crore for the first quarter of this financial year on rising bad loans and sliding core income. The Kolkata-based private sector bank had earned a net profit of ₹1,063 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. Total income rose to ₹6,201 crore during the June quarter of 2025-26, from ₹6,082 crore in the same period of FY25, Bandhan Bank said in a regulatory filing. However, interest earned by the bank declined to ₹5,476 crore from ₹5,536 crore in June quarter FY25. Net interest income (NII) as of Q1 FY26 also slipped to ₹2,757 crore as against ₹2,987 crore in Q1 FY25.

### IOB net profit surges

**New Delhi:** Indian Overseas Bank Friday reported a 76 per cent jump in net profit to ₹1,111 crore during the first quarter of this financial year. The Chennai-based bank had earned a net profit of ₹633 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. The total income rose to ₹8,866 crore during the June quarter of 2025-26, from ₹7,568 crore in the same quarter of FY25, IOB said in a regulatory filing.

### RIL reports net profit

**New Delhi:** Reliance Industries Friday reported its highest-ever quarterly profit of ₹26,994 crore for the April-June quarter, reflecting a growth of 78.3 per cent over the year-ago period, driven by a bumper showing of consumer businesses. The oil-to-retail-to-telecom conglomerate's consolidated net profit attributable to owners of the company stood at ₹26,994 crore, or ₹19.95 per share, in April-June 2025 compared to ₹15,138 crore earnings in a year-ago period, according to an exchange filing.

## BatX Energies, Rocklink to set up rare earth recycling ecosystem

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 18:** Battery recycling firm BatX Energies Friday said it has tied up with Germany's Rocklink GmbH to set up the country's first integrated rare earth magnet recycling and refining ecosystem.

The partnership is a direct outcome of increasing alignment under the EU-India Trade and Technology Council and represents a significant milestone in fostering sustainable and secure critical mineral value chains between Europe and India, the company said in a statement.

A major milestone will be the commissioning of India's first fully integrated rare earth refining facility, designed to meet zero-liquid-discharge (ZLD) standards and export compliance benchmarks, it added.

The partnership will jointly develop and commercialise advanced solvent extraction (SX) technologies to efficiently sepa-

rate and purify high-value rare earth elements, it added.

The two companies will co-develop and file patents for the technologies in both India and Europe, creating a joint intellectual property portfolio, it said.

Ultimately, the collaboration aims to enable a domestic rare earth supply chain in India while simultaneously strengthening Europe's access to sustainable and circular sources of critical materials, aligning with the strategic priorities of both economies under the EU-India Trade and Technology Council, it added.

"This partnership marks a defining moment in India's journey toward rare earth self-reliance," Utkarsh Singh, CEO of BatX Energies, said.

Leonard Ansorge, Director at Rocklink GmbH, said: "Our alliance with BatX brings together our materials and refining expertise with BatX's innovative and practical approaches on refining to deliver tangible results in short development cycles."

## BIZ BUZZ

### AM/NS India commissions new production line

**DELHI:** ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) Friday announced the commissioning of a new, state-of-the-art Continuous Galvanising Line (CGL) at its flagship plant in Hazira, Gujarat. This development establishes AM/NS India as the only company in India with a modern CGL line capable of producing Advanced High-Strength Steel (AHSS) with strength levels up to 1180 megapascals (MPa) - essential for exceptional safety, durability, and sustainability for evolving automotive applications. Dilip Oommen, Chief Executive Officer, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India), said, "The commissioning of the first-of-its-kind Continuous Galvanising Line marks another defining moment in our expansion project, inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. This ambitious project's efforts are now coming to fruition, and we can proudly say that the new line and upcoming facilities are designed to produce steel that matches the quality of offerings currently available in developed nations."



### Hero Moto rolls out VIDA VX2

**CUTTACK:** Hero MotoCorp's electric-mobility brand VIDA today rolled out the all-new VIDA VX2 at twin launch ceremonies held at Premia Cuttack, Tala Telanga Bazaar and Essen Hero, Sikharpur. The scooter was unveiled in the presence of Hemant Kumar Thacker and Saurabh Thacker, Owners of Essen Automobiles, alongside Subhro Banerjee, Territory Sales Manager -VIDA, and Amar Sharma, Territory Sales Officer, VIDA. "With the VIDA VX2 we are bringing cutting-edge EV technology to everyday riders in Cuttack," said Hemant Kumar Thacker. "



### BoB organises health check-up camp at Nayapalli

**BHUBANESWAR:** On the occasion of Bank's 118th Foundation Day, Bank of Baroda organised a Health Check-up Camp at its Regional Office in Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar, July 17. More than 118 Staff Members and customers attended and got their Health Check-up at the camp. BoB undertakes this activity as a part bank's initiative to serve the customers and taking care of its staff members. In Odisha, the bank has a network of 202 branches spread across all districts and 205 ATMs covering all important centres throughout State.



# Informal Chinese sanctions hurting India's electronics sector

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, July 18:** Informal trade restrictions imposed by China on capital equipment, critical minerals, and skilled technical personnel, can adversely impact India's electronics manufacturing ecosystem and constrain India's deeper integration into global value chains (GVCs), leading industry body India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) has said.

In a letter written to Minister of Electronics and IT, Ashwini Vaishnav, the ICEA claimed that in a sector defined by competitiveness and tight timelines, three specific choke-points being administered by the Chinese government in a planned and sequential man-

ner, "aimed at undermining India's ability to compete globally and produce at scale".

India's electronics and mobile manufacturing sector has seen a remarkable growth over the past decade, driven by forward-looking policy interventions and private sector investments and the shift of GVCs to India.

At the forefront of this growth is smartphone manufacturing, which reached \$64 billion in production in FY25, with exports accounting for 38 per cent to \$24.1 billion.

In turn, smartphone exports have propelled electronics from the seventh-largest export in FY20 to reach the third-largest export in FY25 reaching \$38.6 billion - only behind engineering goods and petroleum.

"From ranking 167th among



India's exports in FY15, smartphones have now become the country's single largest export. This success is a direct outcome of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme launched in 2020, and aligns with the Government's vision of scaling electronics production to \$500 billion," the letter read.

China remains the dominant global source of high-precision tools and specialised machinery - an outcome of three decades of industrial clustering and deep GVC integration.

"For the electronics sector,

including smartphones, this has created a high dependency on China for capital equipment," the ICEA said in its letter. For over a year, China has been restricting the export of equipment to India across multiple sectors, including heavy-duty boring machines and solar equipment, now extending the restrictions over the last 8 months to electronics manufacturing, the industry body alleged.

"These disruptions are leading to operational inefficiencies, impacting scale and above all raising costs of production, since producing this equipment locally or in collaboration with Japan or Korea costs 3-4 times higher than Chinese imports," the ICEA highlighted.

Recent curbs by China on

rare earth materials are also risking input shortages for smartphone manufacturers operating in India.

Alternate sources are scarce and, where available, economically unviable, difficult to scale, or logistically inefficient, according to the ICEA.

There have also been travel restrictions and recall of Chinese technical teams working in India. "Over the last three months, China has taken two specific actions creating massive risks to India's supply chains in this space -- It has directed select companies that produce capex to wind up India operations and remove trained Indian professionals from their rolls, thus cutting off the technology transfer link that existed with China.

### Adani group exits AWL Agri Business

**NEW DELHI:** Adani Group Friday exited AWL Agri Business (formerly known as Adani Wilmar) by selling its remaining 10.42 per cent stake in the company for ₹3,732 crore through open market transactions, according to the BSE data. Adani Commodities LLP (ACL), a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises, offloaded a total of 13,54,82,400 equity shares in 11 tranches on Friday, amounting to a 10.42 per cent stake in AWL Agri Business, as per the block deal data on the BSE. Shares of AWL Agri Business slipped 1.31 per cent to close at ₹274.60 apiece on the BSE. Thursday, billionaire Gautam Adani-promoted Adani Group said it has sold a 20 per cent stake in AWL Agri Business to Wilmar International Singapore for ₹7,150 crore, as part of its decision to exit the FMCG business and focus on the infrastructure vertical.



# Erigaisi scripts history

Grandmaster becomes first Indian to reach semifinals of Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour



## Pragg bows out of title race

ov with his extra material. Earlier in the first game too, Arjun enjoyed an advantage after the opening, but some unforced errors in the later part of the game allowed the Uzbek to get a half point.

Praggnanandhaa and Caruana were involved in as many as seven decisive games and the Indian was in lead on three occasions. Praggnanandhaa won the first, lost the second and the story continued till the sixth, until Caruana pulled away before winning the decisive seventh game.

It is not the end of the road for Praggnanandhaa though as he now moves to the lower bracket with seven other players for another set of knockout games.

## MILESTONE BY EVES

**Batumi:** Grandmasters Koneru Humpy, D Harika and R Vaishali and International Master Divya Deshmukh stormed into the quarterfinals of the FIDE World Women's Chess Cup, scripting history as India became the first country to have four players in the tournament's last-eight stage. All four women won their tiebreaks to advance to the last eight stage. With all four Indian women into the quarterfinals it has now become a race between India and China as to who would annex the Cup and make to the top three that guarantees a place in the women's Candidates that will determine the challenger for the next Women's World Championship. While Humpy and Vaishali will next face China's Song Yuxin and Tan Zhongyi respectively, Divya will take on Harika in an all Indian quarterfinal.

the other winners in the quarterfinal stage, defeating compatriot Hikaru Nakamura and Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan respectively.

While Aronian won by a 2.5-1.5 margin over four games, Niemann took longer in beating Sindarov 4-2.

In the semifinals, Arjun will take on Aronian while Niemann will meet Caruana.

In the lower bracket, world number one Magnus Carlsen regained his winning touch and ousted Vidit Gujrathi 2-0. American Wesley So won 1.5-0.5 against compatriot Sam-

uel Sevian while Leinier Dominguez Perez had a smooth 1.5-0.5 victory over Bibisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan.

Vincent Keymer of Germany, the winner of the first leg, defeated Robson Ray, also from America, by 2.5-1.5 margin.

Arjun was a class act in both games and enjoyed the advantage from the word go. Playing white in the second game the Indian won a rook for a Bishop early, and very soon, it did not look like a Freestyle game, as Arjun simply overpowered Abduasattorov.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Las Vegas, July 18:** Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi defeated Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov to storm into the semifinals but R Praggnanandhaa bowed out of the title race after losing to USA's Fabiano Caruana at the \$750,000 Freestyle Grand Slam Tour here.

Arjun prevailed over Abduasattorov 1.5-0.5 while Praggnanandhaa lost an intense battle 3-4 against Caruana.

The American duo of Levon Aronian and Hans Moke Niemann were

## A CHANCE TO BE PART OF

# METTLE MEET 2025

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# OrissaPOST

## A

## Q

## U

## I

## Z

Extravaganza

### RULES & REGULATIONS

- Everyone will have to mail their answers to [mettlemeet@orissapost.com](mailto:mettlemeet@orissapost.com)
- Answers to the questions will follow the next day. The names of the winners will also be announced along with their pictures.
- Answers mailed between 8.00am to 6.00pm each day will be considered valid.
- OrissaPOST's decision on all entries will be final. No complaints will be entertained.
- Participants must send their entries with a **passport size photograph, mobile numbers and residential address**. Otherwise the entries will not be entertained.
- There can be only one winner from one family.
- Invitation cards to the winners will only be issued on presentation of Valid ID proof - **Voter Card, Aadhaar Card, Driving License, Passport, School ID card** (In case of students till Class XI)
- No employee or families of OrissaPOST team can be part of the competition.

### TODAY'S QUESTION

In 1969, a major economic reform in India saw 14 of the country's largest commercial banks brought under government ownership. What significant financial policy was implemented on this day?

My Struggle

### ANSWER TO FRIDAY'S QUESTION

My Struggle

### THE TWO LUCKY WINNERS

**JITENDRANATH PRADHAN**

**TANISHNA BISOI**

Others who answered correctly are

Dr Joseph John, Bishnu Prasada Dash, Bhumika Subhalaxmi, Ranjita Sethi, Abinash Das, Sai Priya Nahak, Debadatta Tripathy, Omm Prakash Sahoo, Sourav Nayak, Alok Ranjan Sahoo, Prayag Das, Megha Satapathy, Ananya Tarai, Divyanshu Mohanty, Vibhu Anand Dash, Sachim Mini

# Jadeja's 'incredible fight' at Lord's Test earns him India's MVP tag

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, July 18:** India head coach Gautam Gambhir led the chorus of praise for experienced all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, describing his heroics in the Lord's Test against England as an "incredible fight".

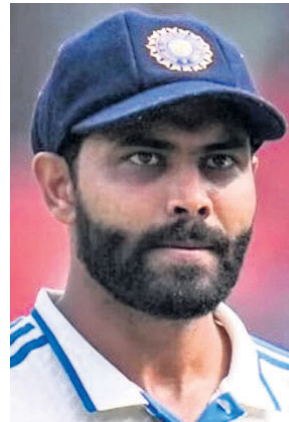
Jadeja remained unbeaten on 61 off 181 balls but despite his valiant knock, India went down by 22 runs in the third Test.

"That was an incredible fight. The fight from Jaddu was absolutely brilliant," said Gambhir in a video titled "The MVP ft. Ravindra Jadeja", which was posted on the BCCI website on Friday. Chasing a modest 193, India's batting line-up crumbled with the top eight lasting less than 40 overs.

But Jadeja, who came in at No7, stood firm and showed immense courage and grit alongside tailenders Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj.

Together, they batted for more than 34 overs to keep India afloat.

Bumrah faced 54 balls for his 5 and Siraj played out 30



deliveries for his 4 before becoming the final wicket to fall to Shoaib Bashir.

India folded for 170 in the five-match series.

"His batting has reached another level. In the last two Tests the consistency and the calmness he brought to the dressing room. I've watched him for so many years and how he's developed his game now, his defence is rock solid, looks like a proper batter,"

Gambhir's deputy Ryan ten Doeschate said in the video.

India's batting coach Sitanshu Kotak, Jadeja's for-

mer Saurashtra teammate at domestic level, highlighted the all-rounder's temperament under pressure.

"I always felt he has the ability to take pressure. With so much of experience, he normally comes with something that the team needs in any challenging conditions. Really, really valuable to the team," Kotak said.

Pacer Mohammed Siraj echoed the sentiment, underlining Jadeja's all-round value. "It's very difficult to get a player like me and we are lucky to have such a player in our team," Siraj said.

Opener Shubman Gill, speaking at the post-match press conference, had earlier summed up Jadeja's impact. "He is one of the most valuable players of India. The skillset he brings with his batting, bowling and fielding. He is someone who is very rare to find. The way Jaddu bhai batted was a very proud effort."

India will have to win the fourth Test beginning in Manchester July 23 to keep their hopes of winning the series alive.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, July 18:** Inter Kashi have been officially declared I-League 2024-25 champions by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled in their favour Friday, resolving a long-standing dispute which has left the domestic league in confusion. CAS has also directed the All India Football Federation (AIFF) to pay 55% of total arbitration costs.

The decision overturns the AIFF Appeal Committee's earlier ruling and hands Kashi a decisive three points, taking their final tally to 42 and edging Churchill Brothers on goal difference.

"The costs of the arbitration, to be served to the Parties by the CAS Court Office separately, shall be borne for 55% by the All-India Football Federation, 15% by Churchill Brothers FC Goa, 15% by Namdhari FC and 15% by Real Kashmir FC. The All-India Football Federation shall pay an amount of CHF 3,000 (three thousand Swiss francs) and Churchill Brothers FC Goa, Namdhari FC and Real



Kashmir FC shall each pay an amount of CHF 1,000 (one thousand Swiss francs) to Inter Kashi FC as legal contribution towards its legal costs and other expenses incurred during these arbitral proceedings," CAS's order read.

The controversy stemmed from Barco's re-registration by Kashi late in the season. Initially

registered before the campaign began, Barco suffered an injury in December, prompting the club to bring in Matija Babovic as a replacement.

However, when Juan Perez del Pino mutually terminated his contract two months later, Kashi opted to re-register Barco as his replacement — a move questioned by the AIFF

Competitions Committee for potentially violating Clause 6.5.7 of the I-League regulations.

The regulation allows clubs to make up to three foreign-player replacements per season in case of long-term injuries or mutual contract terminations, but the re-registration of an already replaced player had not been tested in practice. The AIFF deemed the move invalid and initially awarded the title to Churchill Brothers. Kashi, however, challenged the decision at CAS.

In its ruling, CAS upheld Kashi's interpretation of the rules, validating Barco's registration and awarding the team the crucial points from the match in question. This victory marks Inter Kashi's second successful appeal at CAS this season, following an earlier case against Namdhari FC, who fielded suspended player Cledson Da Silva — a ruling that had also earned Kashi three points.

With the latest verdict, Inter Kashi's total of 42 points places them atop the I-League standings, ahead of Churchill Brothers on goal difference.

# World Youth Team Bridge C'ships: U-31 team wins bronze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 18:** India's U-31 bridge team won the bronze medal while the U-16 side finished fourth in the 19th World Youth Team Championships held at Salsomaggiore in Italy.

On the final day of the tournament Thursday, two Indian teams were in contention for podium finishes.

The U-16 team lost the semifinal playoff against France after two close sets. It however became the first Indian side to advance this far in the competition.

The U-31 team, playing in the 'Board A Match' event, finished third among 24 competing sides to win the bronze.

The U-16 team comprised of Prakhar Bansal, Viha Gahrotra, Ananya Mehta, Jashith Narang, Adhiyaman Zodypache and Agilan Zodypache.

They had beaten Chinese Taipei by six IMPs the quarterfinal.

The Indian U-21 and U-26 teams did not make it to top eight.

# BCCI minting more money than ever

**BCCI earned ₹9,741 crore in 2023-24, IPL alone fetched over ₹5,000 crore**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 18:** The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) generated a record revenue of Rs 9741 crore in the 2023-24 financial year, according to a report.

Indian Premier League (IPL), which was described as the golden goose of BCCI in the report, contributed 59 per cent of the total revenue amounting to Rs 5761 crore.

"BCCI in 2007 discovered a golden goose — the IPL which is now a 100 per cent part of the BCCI. The tournament is the best and media rights are constantly going up. IPL also ensures that players from Ranji Trophy-level get a playing field. IPL will continue to churn out profitability as it grows further," said Lloyd Mathias, business strategist and independent director.

The BCCI earned Rs 361 crore from the media rights of non-IPL events which included the rights for series featuring the Indian cricket team. At the moment, Viacom18 holds the rights for the Indian cricket team matches while Disney Star and Viacom18 have the IPL

## CRICKET CRAZE

rights for the 2023-27 cycle. "BCCI has immense potential to commercialise traditional formats like Ranji Trophy, Duleep Trophy, or CK Nayudu Trophy to shore up non-IPL revenues. Moreover, the board has close to Rs 30,000 crore in reserves, which brings

in about Rs 1,000 crore a year in interest alone. These revenues aren't just sustainable—they are poised to grow 10-12 per cent annually, thanks to expanding sponsorships, media deals, and matchday earnings," said Sandeep Goyal, Chief of Rediffusion.

The growing revenue has put BCCI in a brilliant position when it comes to the global cricketing landscape. Even the International Cricket Council (ICC) has reiterated how important India is to global cricket. "ICC depends on BCCI for the bulk of its funding. ICC is not driving revenue as it should," said Ajimon Francis, Managing Director at Brand Finance India.

## SNIPPETS

### Jota inducted into Wolves' Hall of Fame

**Lisbon:** Wolverhampton Wanderers have paid tribute to Portuguese forward Diogo Jota by inducting him into the club's Hall of Fame after he was killed in a car accident earlier this month. Jota helped Wolves gain promotion to the Premier League in 2018 before joining Liverpool in 2020. "Diogo was not only a phenomenal footballer, but someone who carried himself with humility and kindness throughout his time at Wolves, and will be sorely missed by all of us," Wolves' director of football administration Matt Wild said in a statement late Thursday. Billy Wright, Derek Dougan and Steve Bull are among those already inducted in the club's Hall of Fame, which was established in 2008.

### Amidst complaints, Dukes ball under scanner

**London:** Amidst criticism over the balls going soft a bit too early, the manufacturer of Dukes ball has said that they would be examining the balls used in the first three Tests between England and India, in a bid to solve the issues surrounding it. The Dukes balls, which have been in production since 1760, have been regarded as high-quality cricket balls, but in the ongoing Test series between England and India, it has been going soft long before the second new ball comes into the picture. "We will take it away, inspect and then start talking to the tanner, talking about all of the raw materials — everything. Everything we do will be reviewed and then if we think some changes need to be made or tightened up, we will," said Dilip Jadodia, owner of British Cricket Balls Ltd, who make the Dukes ball, to BBC Sport Friday.