



Dark desires

Actor Triptii Dimri expresses her desire to take on grey or negative roles in future projects

LEISURE | P2



Thailand bombs Cambodia

A Thai F-16 fighter jet bombs targets in Cambodia, both sides said, as weeks of tension over a border dispute escalated Thursday

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Private sector grows

Growth in private sector remains robust in July, supported by strong manufacturing and demand despite inflation

BUSINESS | P11



Pant's plucky fifty

Rishabh Pant strikes a courageous fifty on a broken foot to take India to 358 in the afternoon session on Day II of the fourth Test

SPORTS | P12



NATURE'S FURY: A wildfire rages across a forested area near Cavuslar village, in Karabuk district, northwest Turkey

AP/PTI PHOTO

Russia plane crash kills all 48 on board

REUTERS

Moscow, July 24: An Antonov An-24 passenger plane carrying 48 people crashed in Russia's Far East Thursday as it was preparing to land, killing everyone on board in an incident that spotlighted the continued use of old, Soviet-era aircraft.

The burning fuselage of the plane, which was made in 1976, was spotted by a search helicopter after it disappeared from radar screens. It had been attempting to land for a second time after failing to touch down on its first approach, the Far Eastern Transport Prosecutor's Office said in a statement.

Operated by the privately-owned Siberian regional airline Angara, it had been en route from the city of Blagoveshchensk near the Chinese border to Tynda, an important railway junction in the Amur region. It was carrying 42 passengers, including five children, and six crew. The regional governor and federal investigators confirmed that everyone on board had been killed.

Investigators said they had



opened a criminal case into the suspected violation of air traffic and air transport rules. The crash is likely to raise new questions about the viability of continuing to fly such old planes in far-flung corners of Russia at a time when Western sanctions have crimped Moscow's ability to access investment and spare parts.

Video shot from a helicopter showed pale smoke rising from the crash site in a densely forested hilly area around 15 km from Tynda. There were no roads to the site and a rescue team had to use heavy machinery to cut a path there.

President Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences to the families of those killed and held a minute's silence at the start of a government meeting.

TRAIN DERAILS

Bhubaneswar: A general compartment of the Shalimar-Sambalpur Mahima Gosain Express derailed near Sambalpur railway station Thursday, but there was no report of any injury, an official statement said. The incident took place between the Sambalpur city station and Sambalpur junction, shortly after the train departed from Sambalpur city at 9:18am at a very slow speed, the East Coast Railway said in a statement. "No loss of life or property in this incident reported," it said. The guard of the train said that a major accident was avoided as the speed of the loco was very slow. Railway officials and local police have reached the site and shifted the passengers to another coach. The East Coast Railway statement said that the rear trolley of a general coach next to the guard van of 20831 Shalimar-Sambalpur Express derailed near Sambalpur City Station at a very slow speed. "Train already left for Sambalpur with all passengers. No one injured," it said. Railway officials including the DRM have reached the site and overseeing early restoration of traffic.

P4

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



To welcome the PM, you'll need to give a screen test... errr...I mean, you'll be screened first

7/11 Mumbai blasts: SC stays HC acquittal order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: The Supreme Court Thursday stayed the Bombay High Court verdict acquitting all 12 accused in the 2006 Mumbai train bomb blasts case but said they need not return to jail.

The SC further directed the Bombay HC judgement not to be treated as a precedent.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh issued notice to all the accused in the case and sought their responses on the appeal filed by the state government.

"We have been informed that all the respondents have been released and there is no question of bringing them back to the prison. However, taking note of the submission made by the solicitor general on the question of law, we are inclined to hold that the impugned judgment shall not be treated as a precedent. To that extent, there shall be a stay of the impugned judgment," the SC said.

During a brief hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Maharashtra government, sought a stay on the HC judgment saying it



would affect pending trials under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). Justice Sundresh enquired if all the accused have been released from jail, noting some accused persons were Pakistani nationals. "They were not arrested," a counsel for the state informed.

On July 21, a special HC bench of Justices Anil Kilar and Shyam Chandak acquitted all the 12 accused, saying the prosecution utterly failed to prove the case and it was 'hard to believe the accused committed the crime'.

Of the 12, five had been sentenced to death and seven to life imprisonment by the special court. One of the death row convicts died in 2021. More than 180 people were killed when seven blasts ripped through Mumbai local trains at various locations on the western line July 11, 2006.

The Maharashtra govern-

ment challenged the HC judgment on grounds, including that the recovery of RDX from an accused, was disbelieved on a 'hyper-technical ground' that the seized explosives were not sealed with a lac seal. The state government, in its appeal, raised several serious objections to the HC order of acquittal. The plea argued due procedural safeguards under Section 23(2) of MCOCA were observed, including proper sanctioning by senior officers like prosecution witness 185 Anami Roy. It said the HC overlooked the validity of these approvals despite no substantial contradiction in the prosecution's evidence.

The plea took exception to the HC's rejection of the recovery of 500 grams of RDX from one of the accused on the ground that it lacked a lac seal.

The state argued RDX, being highly inflammable, was not sealed for safety reasons and the recovery was duly sanctioned and documented.

The HC allowed the appeals filed by the accused against their conviction and sentences imposed on them by a special court in 2015. The HC verdict came as a major embarrassment to the Maharashtra ATS which probed the case.

India & UK seal historic trade deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, July 24: India and the UK Thursday signed a landmark trade deal to boost two-way trade by eliminating tariffs on cars, textiles, whisky and range of other products as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his UK counterpart Keir Starmer firmed up the 'Vision 2035' strategy to expand ties in areas of defence, technology, clean energy and migration.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), signed by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and his UK counterpart Jonathan Reynolds in presence of the two PMs, seeks to enhance bilateral trade by around USD 34 billion annually besides ensuring better market access.

The trade pact, which is Britain's biggest such deal since its exit from the European Union, came amid growing global concern over US President Donald Trump's tariff tussle. The two sides have also agreed to negotiate a Double Contribution Convention (DCC) that will provide for exempting employers of Indian workers from paying social security con-

The trade pact, which is UK's biggest such deal since its exit from the EU, came amid growing global concern over US President Donald Trump's tariff tussle

tributions in the UK for upto three years. The DCC will come into effect along with the CETA.

India and UK also unveiled a defence industrial roadmap for co-development and co-production of key defence products and platforms. India flagged its concerns to the UK over increasing activities of pro-Khalistani elements from British soil. The central focus during Modi's visit to the UK was the trade deal that is expected to ensure comprehensive market access for Indian goods across all sectors and

India will gain from tariff elimination on about 99 per cent of product categories (product categories) covering almost 100 per cent of the trade values.

"The pact paves the way for enhanced market access in the UK for Indian textiles, footwear, gems and jewellery, seafood, and engineering goods. It will also unlock new opportunities for India's agricultural produce and processed food industry. This agreement will be especially beneficial for India's youth, farmers, fishermen, and the MSME sector," Modi said.

Starmer said the trade deal will lower prices on Indian goods, including clothes, shoes and food.

Nod for ₹4,982cr industrial projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: In a major boost to Odisha's industrial growth, the State-Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA), chaired by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, approved 23 investment proposals worth Rs 4,982.66 crore Thursday.

"These projects are expected to create 11,933 employment opportunities across 12 districts, accelerating the state's journey towards achieving the Samruddha Odisha 2036 vision," Ahuja said.

Luminous Power got the nod to invest Rs 950 crore to build a solar cell and PV module plant in Gopalpur, creating 1,000 jobs. BonV Technology will invest Rs 300 crore in a drone park in Khurda, creating 760 jobs.

Similarly, Amposys Technologies will set up a development centre in Khurda with Rs 65 crore investment. It will create 155 jobs.

Among other projects, KPR Mill Limited will invest Rs 350 crore in Khurda, producing 46.8 million garments annually and creating 5,000 jobs.

Anil Ambani faces ED heat

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 24: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday conducted raids at multiple locations as part of an alleged Rs 3,000 crore worth bank loan fraud-linked money laundering case against the companies of Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani, official sources said.

Some more bank loans taken by these companies apart from certain alleged undisclosed foreign assets are under the ED scanner. More than 35 premises in Mumbai belonging to 50 companies and 25 people were searched under the PMLA. Some documents and computer peripherals have been recovered, they said. The probe is being carried out by a Delhi-based investigation unit of the ED.

ED sources said they are primarily probing allegations of illegal loan diversion of around Rs 3,000 crore, given by the Yes Bank to the group companies of Ambani between 2017 and 2019. P9

1,00,000-yr-old burial site reveals early humans' complex rituals

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shoham (Israel), July 24: Archaeologists believe they have found one of the oldest burial sites in the world at a cave in Israel, where the well-preserved remains of early humans dating back some 1,00,000 years were carefully arranged in pits.

The findings at Tinsihmet Cave in central Israel, published in an academic journal earlier this year, build on previous discoveries in northern Israel and add to a growing understanding of the origins of human burial.

Of particular interest to archaeologists are objects found beside the remains that may have been used during ceremonies to honour the dead and could shed light on how our ancient ancestors thought about spirituality and the afterlife.

"This is an amazing revolutionary innovation for our species," said Yossi Zaidner, one of the directors of the Tinsihmet excavation and a professor of archaeology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. "It's actually the first time we are starting to use this behaviour."

Archaeologists working at Tinsihmet since 2016 have discovered the remains of five early humans that date back to around 1,10,000 to 1,00,000 years ago, according to various technologies. The skeletons were discovered in pits and carefully arranged in a foetal position, which is known as a burial position, said Zaidner. Many were found with objects, such as basalt pebbles, animal remains or fragments of ochre, a reddish pigment made from iron-rich rocks.

These objects, some sourced



from hundreds of kilometres away, had no known practical use for daily life, so experts believe they were part of complex rituals meant to honour the dead.

Tinsihmet Cave is a dark slash in central Israel's rolling hills filled with squeaking fruit bats. Inside and around the

cave is an unassuming stone mound which Zaidner calls "one of the three or four most important sites for study of human evolution and behaviour during the Paleolithic time."

The Paleolithic era, also known as the Stone Age because of the onset of stone tools, lasted from as early as 3.3

million years ago until around 10,000 years ago. Tinsihmet Cave is from the Middle Paleolithic era, roughly between 250,000 to 30,000 years ago.

Some of the Tinsihmet researchers' core findings were published in March in Nature Human Behaviour. A key discovery was the remains of five early humans, including two full skeletons and three isolated skulls with other bones and teeth. Also of note were more than 500 differently sized fragments of red and orange ochre, a pigment created by heating iron-rich stones to a certain temperature — evidence that early humans had the means to create decorative objects.

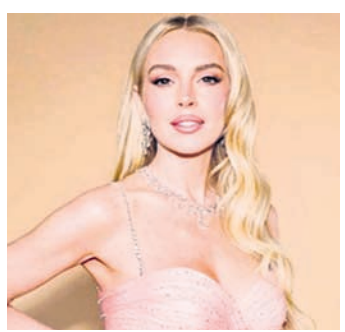
"Here we see a really complex set of behaviours, not related to just food and surviving," Zaidner said. Using hand chisels and delicate, pen-sized

pneumatic drills that resemble dental tools, archaeologists will need many more years to excavate the site. The field work, which started in 2016, is usually done over the summer months. At the entrance to the cave, the skull of one of the early humans is slowly emerging from the rock sediment; it will be years before it is fully excavated.

Tinsihmet is exceptionally important to archaeologists because the local climate preserved the bones, tools, and ornaments in good condition, unlike many other parts of the world where these items were lost to time, said Christian Tryon, a professor at the University of Connecticut.

Tinsihmet has helped archaeologists conclude that burial practices started to become more widespread and complex.

leisure



LOHAN WANTS TO DO MORE DRAMATIC ROLES

Hollywood star Lindsay Lohan, returning to the big screen with the comedy sequel *Freakier Friday*, shared her desire to explore more serious and dramatic roles. Speaking at the Los Angeles premiere, she also revealed her excitement about an upcoming TV show project with *Hulu*.

WILL SMITH SPARKS BANKRUPTCY RUMOURS

Will Smith is reportedly facing financial pressures, leading him to sell properties amidst rising expenses and career setbacks. The actor's post-Oscars fallout, coupled with struggling music sales and potential marital issues with Jada, are contributing factors.



FORTUNE FORECAST



ARIES
 You may get all nostalgic and wistful today, predicts Ganesha. You will go out of your way to improve your relationships. To you, your commitment is an investment for the future. The result is loving life-long bonds.

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

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

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

LEO
 Today, the force is with you. Well, at least part of the force that deals with being a smooth talker, says Ganesha. It is your power of expression that comes to the fore and stands you in good stead. Having mastered the art of communication, you now are a wizard of words who conjures showers of pearls with a mere twist of the tongue.

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

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

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

SAGITTARIUS
 Appreciation for all that excellent work you have put in is a no-go for you! Yet, you stand to gain nothing by losing heart. While the acknowledgement you look for has been delayed, Ganesha says it has not been denied and is in the offing already.

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

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

PISCES
 A hectic day of socialising awaits you. You will discover hidden talents and unnoticed traits about yourself. Either that, or whoever brought them to your notice was only lying to get some socialising action of their own. You are a person of action, as well as of words, and hence, will go on to act on what you have planned, says Ganesha.



Aamir to hoist Tricolour at IFFM

Mumbai: Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan will hoist the Indian national flag at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) 2025 in August. The ceremony will take place as part of the festival's annual Independence Day celebrations. "The flag hoisting ceremony at IFFM is more than just a formal tradition; it's a deeply emotional and unifying experience. Seeing the Tiranga unfurl on foreign soil, surrounded by artists, filmmakers, and members of the Indian and Australian communities, fills our hearts with pride," said festival director Mitu Bhowmick Lange. The festival director added: "Having Aamir Khan, whose voice vision and cinema has had a profound impact on generations of film lovers not just in India but globally, lead this moment is truly a rare honour." Bhowmick added that Aamir's presence represents the strength and integrity of Indian storytelling and "the values we stand for at IFFM, equality and unity in diversity. We look forward to welcoming audiences from all walks of life to witness this inspiring moment." IFFM, backed by the Government of Victoria, stands as the largest Indian film festival held outside of India. With a legacy of showcasing powerful and diverse Indian stories, the festival continues to be a beacon of inclusivity and cinematic excellence.



TRIPTII'S DESIRE

Mumbai: Triptii Dimri, known for her emotionally rich performances in films like *Bulbul*, *Qala*, and *Laila Majnu*, is now preparing for her next release, *Dhadak 2*, alongside Siddhant Chaturvedi. Directed by Shazia Iqbal, the film is set to hit theatres August 1. Over the years, Triptii has carved a niche for herself by portraying characters that span love, heart-break, betrayal, and subtle humour. However, she has yet to explore the realm of grey or

negative roles — something she's now keen on pursuing. Expressing her desire to dive into more complex roles, Triptii recently shared that she would love to portray a character like Kajol's in *Gupt*, known for its layered and dark undertones. "Kajol was brilliant in *Gupt*! I'd love to do something like that," she said, adding that the perception of negative roles has evolved significantly. "Earlier, villains were treated as a separate category, but now anyone can play a grey-shaded role." Triptii be-

lieves this shift allows actors to explore deeper emotional dimensions. "The guy who played the negative role in our film is such a soft-spoken person—you'd never guess he could portray something so dark. That's the magic of acting," she said. Beyond *Dhadak 2*, Triptii's upcoming projects include *Spirit*, *Arjun Ustara*, *Animal Park*, and an untitled Imtiaz Ali film.

Uorfi claps back at trolls

Mumbai: Uorfi Javed, Thursday, took to social media to shut down trolls in her signature bold style. Addressing the recent memes and online comments about her appearance, the actress shared a video revealing her face without lip fillers and swelling. In her post, Uorfi said she had a good laugh over all the trolling. Sharing her images and video, the *Bigg Boss OTT* contestant wrote, "All the trolling and the memes, honestly I had a good laugh! Here you go this is my face without the fillers or



swelling now, not used to seeing my face or lips like that I've used a lip plumper here tho." In the images, Javed could be seen striking different poses for the camera. Reacting to her post, Divyaa Agarwal commented, "You are beautiful." Jasmine Bhasin wrote, "Beautiful beautiful." Uorfi Javed recently made headlines after she took to Instagram to reveal the side effects of getting her lip fillers dissolved. Her visibly swollen face raised eyebrows on social media. She captioned the video, "No this is not a filter, I decided to get my fillers dissolved as they were every misplaced. I will get them again but naturally, I'm not saying no to fillers at all. Dissolving is painful. Also it's very very important you go to a good doctor for fillers." IANS

CHILDREN'S FILM FEST: DAY II Shadow puppetry workshop steals show

Bhubaneswar: The second day of the third edition of the Children's Film Festival (CFF), organised by the Film Society Bhubaneswar (FSB), brought a wave of excitement as student explored the magic of storytelling through animation and shadow puppetry. The day began with the screening of *The Secret World of Arrietty*, a Japanese animated fantasy film that captivated the audience with the tale of a tiny girl, Arrietty, who lives secretly



in a suburban house with her parents. Hidden beneath the floorboards, she borrows household items to survive. The story takes a turn when 12-year-old Shawn discovers



her, forming a fragile friendship that could jeopardize her family's existence.

Following the screening, students participated in an engaging Shadow Puppetry Workshop conducted by FSB volunteers. Using paper cut-outs and backlit projection, they created characters, objects, and stories, complete with voiceovers. "I had only heard about shadow puppetry before, but got to create my own story with friends from other schools. It was so much fun!" said Krishav Dalmia, a Class VII student from KIIT

International School. "Working with students from Class VI and VII has been eye-opening. Their imagination, storytelling instinct, and teamwork are truly impressive," shares Subhashree Mohanty, an FSB volunteer. The short films created during the workshop will be screened on the festival's concluding day, where parents and teachers will join to celebrate the creativity of their young storytellers. PNN

PEANUTS



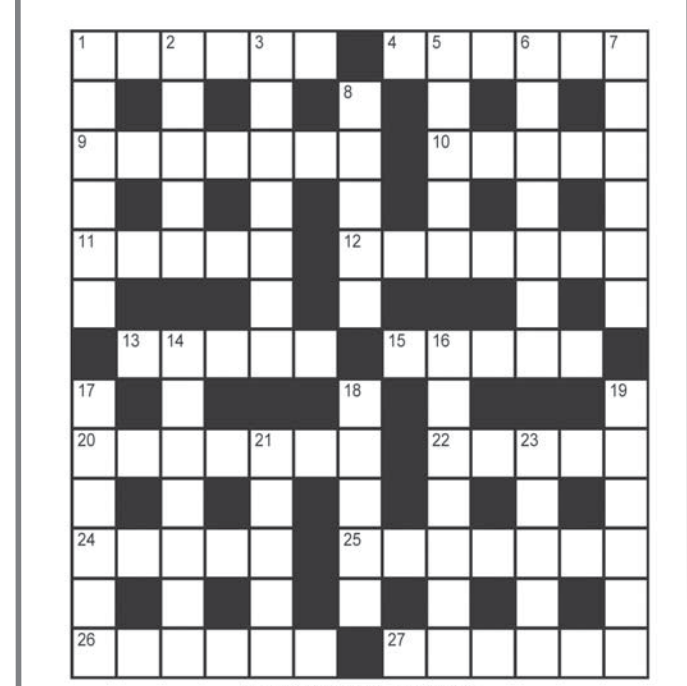
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Spectres
 - 4 Horse-drawn carriage
 - 9 Too well nourished
 - 10 Sustain
 - 11 Fill with joy
 - 12 Some exes get it
 - 13 Piece of cave art
 - 15 Dens
 - 20 Pilot
 - 22 Small goose
 - 24 Expensive
 - 25 Great circle
 - 26 Compact
 - 27 Fish hawk
 - 6 Comfort
 - 7 Joan of Arc, e.g.
 - 8 Utopian
 - 14 Employ
 - 16 Bowers
 - 17 Floor covering
 - 18 Astrological ram
 - 19 Well-built
 - 21 Rendezvous
 - 23 Thespian

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

F	A	T	I	G	U	E	S	C	A	R	F
R	A	A	L	L	W	N	A				
A	R	G	E	N	T	I	N	A	C	O	S
U		D	X	M	E	T					
D	O	D	G	E	I	M	P	A	S	S	E
I	R	R									
V	A	N	I	S	H	F	A	M	O	U	S
A	G	E	F	N	R						
C	H	A	P	E	A	U	A	I	S	L	E
A	L	L	N	L	A						
T	A	I	V	I	N	E	Y	A	R	D	S
E	N	E	E	S	I	E					
S	A	G	A	S	L	E	E	W	A	R	D

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

BJP: No-trust motion, if brought, will boomerang



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 24: A day after the state Congress called upon the principal Opposition party BJD to move a no-confidence motion against the BJP government over crimes against women, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari Thursday dismissed talks of such a motion against the BJP government in the state and claimed that it will boomerang and hit the Opposition while leaving the ruling party unscathed.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das had Wednesday said that the BJD should move a no-confidence motion in the upcoming Monsoon Session of the Assembly if the regional party is serious about fighting for

We are ready to face any no-confidence motion. But Congress and BJD must answer for the wrongdoings of over 70 years

SURESH PUJARI | REVENUE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT MINISTER

for decades during which numerous heinous crimes against women occurred. They must answer for the wrongdoings of over 70 years. We have completed just one year in office.”

The minister asserted that the BJP government would emerge “unscathed”, while the Opposition would be “seriously injured”.

Senior BJD leader and former leader of opposition Bhupinder Singh said he was optimistic that a no-confidence motion would be brought in the upcoming Assembly session.

“However, BJD president Naveen Patnaik will take a final call,” he said, adding that a non-confidence motion will put a huge pressure on the state’s BJP government.

BJD senior vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra also said Wednesday that Patnaik will take a final decision on the proposed no-confidence motion.

“The government is yet to notify the dates for the upcoming monsoon session,” Mishra said.

Political observers said even if a no-confidence motion is brought in the Assembly, it will be “symbolic” as the ruling BJP has a comfortable majority of 81 MLAs (BJP’s 78 and 3 Independents) against the Opposition’s combined 66 (BJD 51, Congress’ 14 and CPI(M)-one). The Odisha Assembly has 147 members.

the rights of women.

Announcing Congress’ support to the BJD in this regard, Das said, “If the BJD does not bring such a motion, the Congress is ready to make a move, but it should get the regional party’s support.”

Responding to Das’ remark, Pujari said, “We are ready to face any no-confidence motion brought by the Opposition. But they (BJD and Congress) must be equally ready to listen to our response. They ruled the state

Cong offers prayer for FM victim, launches app

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: The Congress party Thursday observed a one-minute silent prayer demanding justice for the 20-year-old female student of FM (Autonomous) College in Balasore who died by self-immolation and launched a mobile app to redress grievances of women of the state.

The Congress leaders and supporters have observed the silent prayer here at the party’s state headquarters and several other places, including educational institutions and party’s branch offices.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das later joined the ‘Shradhanjali Sabha’ organised here in front of Utkal University.

Speaking to mediapersons, Das said, “We had appealed to people, including students, to observe a one-minute prayer to provide justice to the victim at 9am Thursday. Prayers have been organised in different places and in educational institutes as a symbolic event.”

Since the victim was a student, the condolence meet was organised in front of Utkal University, he said.

Later, the party launched a mobile app to redress grievances of women of the state.

“On the ‘Ekadashah’ of the Balasore victim, we have launched the women grievance redressal cell to help and support the women in distress. We created the app because in many cases the police are not hearing the issues of the women, who became victim of rape and other atrocities,” said Minakshi Bahinipati, OPCC women’s wing president.

The mobile app will keep the identity of the complainant anonymous and it will work 24x7.

The party would continue to fight for the rights of the women of the state and to provide justice to them, she said.

Earlier, the Nari Nyay Bahini outfit also launched ‘Nari Nyay Bahini’ app Wednesday, with a pledge to ensure justice for women and raise awareness against rising gender-based violence.

Notably, the Integrated BED student of the college set herself ablaze on the college campus July 12 and died at AIIMS Bhubaneswar July 14 night.

HC grants bail to IRS officer Raghuvanshi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: The Orissa High Court has granted bail to Chintan Raghuvanshi, Deputy Director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Bhubaneswar Zonal office who had been arrested by the CBI in connection with a ₹20-lakh bribery case May 24.

Justice Gaurishankar Satpathy Wednesday allowed Raghuvanshi to proceed on bail on condition that the 2013-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer furnished personal bond of ₹1 lakh along with two solvent sureties. The court has also directed Raghuvanshi to deposit his passport and not leave the territorial jurisdiction of the trial court to curb apprehensions of flight risk as raised by the CBI counsel. Along with Raghuvanshi, the court also granted bail to alleged middleman Bhakti Binod Behera by imposing similar conditions.

While granting bail to Raghuvanshi and Behera, Justice Satpathy said after having considered submissions made by the CBI it was clear that the investigation has progressed a lot. However, the petitioners

are inside the jail custody and there is no immediate prospect of trial, the court said.

“The court also observed that the petitioners are in custody for more than 50 days though the minimum punishment prescribed for the offence made out by the CBI against the petitioners is just three years,” said Raghuvanshi’s counsel Lalitendu Mishra.

The court also made it clear that granting bail would only secure the liberty of a person for a temporary period until the accused person is found guilty of the offence. “Bail is the rule, but jail is the exception, which follows from the right of the accused to be presumed innocent until proven guilty at the trial,” the court said.

Considering the fact that CBI never sought for any custodial interrogation of the petitioners who had cooperated in the investigation, the court, while citing the Supreme Court judgment in Satendra Kumar Antil (supra) Vs CBI case of 2020, said the accused can be released safely on personal bond if the court is satisfied that he has roots in the community, and is not likely to abscond.

CM to inaugurate Odisha Tex 2025 today

The event aims to position Odisha as a leading hub for textiles and apparel manufacturing in India

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will inaugurate the Odisha Tex 2025, east-India’s biggest textile event, at the State Convention Centre in Lok Seva Bhavan here, today (Friday).

Over 500 delegates, including top industry leaders, senior government officials, and investors are scheduled to participate in the mega event which is aimed at positioning Odisha as the textile hub of eastern India.

During the event, the state government will formally launch six new parks for textiles, apparel, and wearables, said Minister of Industries, Sampad Swain who



took review of the preparations Thursday. These parks, equipped with world-class facilities, will be ready for operation soon, Swain said.

The minister said Odisha Tex 2025 will serve as a strategic platform for fostering sustainable growth in the textile sector through MoU signings, industry interactions, and key policy announcements. He said the state government is committed to providing world-class infrastructure and seamless arrangements to ensure the event’s successful execution.

“It is not just an event, it is a mission to showcase Odisha’s strength in the textile sector and create a platform



LEARN IN MOTHER TONGUE

School & Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain and other dignitaries unveil Odia medium Plus II Science books at Rama Devi Women’s University in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



POLITICKLE by MANJUL

Lopar: Heavy rainfall likely in 12 districts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 24: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Thursday said heavy rainfall is expected in at least 12 districts of Odisha under the impact of a low-pressure area (Lopar) formed over the Bay of Bengal.

“The remnant of tropical cyclone ‘WIPHA’ has emerged and under its influence, a low-pressure area has formed over the North Bay of Bengal at 5:30am Thursday,” IMD’s Bhubaneswar regional centre said on X.

The Lopar is likely to become well-marked during the next 24 hours and move west-north-westwards towards north Odisha and adjoining West Bengal coasts during the next 48 hours, it said.

Under the impact of the system, heavy rainfall would occur in different districts of Odisha till July 28. Forecasting heavy downpour, the IMD centre has issued an Orange warning (be prepared to take action) for Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Malkangiri and Koraput districts for Thursday.

Similarly, Yellow warning (be aware) has been issued for Sundargarh, Deogarh, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Dhenkanal, and Angul districts for the day as these districts would experience heavy rainfall and thunderstorm with lightning and winds (30-40 kmph), according to an IMD bulletin.

Thunderstorms with lightning and winds (30-40 kmph) are also expected in Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, and Gajapati districts, the bulletin said.

CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

BJD to protest in Koraput tomorrow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 24: Continuing its stir over the rising crimes against women across Odisha, the Opposition BJD Thursday announced that it will hold a protest in front of the South Western DIG office in Koraput July 26.

Addressing a presser, BJD senior general secretary and spokesperson Pradeep Majhi alleged that the state’s BJP government has “utterly failed to ensure the safety and security of women across the state.”

“A 15-year-old girl was raped twice within a few hours in Malkangiri district this week. First, she was picked up and gangraped by three miscreants. While returning home, she was again raped by a truck driver. Under the so-called double-engine government, such shameful incidents are taking place,” Majhi alleged.

He also claimed that a nursing student from Raigarh block of Nabarangpur district was admitted to AIIMS Bhubaneswar in a critical condition Thursday after she was attacked by a miscreant in Jeypore Town.

“Following an FIR, the accused was brought to police station, but was released. Soon after, the miscreant went to the victim’s village and tortured her. Later, she consumed poison and had to be rushed to AIIMS Bhubaneswar,” Majhi alleged.

Though the girl had filed an FIR at Jeypore police station in Koraput district, her grandfather filed another FIR at Raigarh in Nabarangpur district.

“Under the so-called double engine government, victims are being forced to file double FIRs, yet justice remains elusive. Frustrated by the lack of justice, the student tried to kill herself. According to the hospital authorities, the victim’s health condition is critical,” Majhi said.

Cong, 7 other parties seek Guv intervention



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 24: Eight political parties, including the Congress and Left, sought the personal intervention of Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati to address the rising crime against women in the state.

A delegation of the eight parties led by Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das called on the governor at Raj Bhavan and submitted a memorandum in this regard.

In the memorandum, the parties alleged that the state has been witnessing an alarming rise in ‘heinous crimes’ against women and girls, and asserted that the recent incidents in Balasore and Puri have shocked the conscience of the state as well as the nation.

A 20-year-old BED student of Fakir Mohan College in Balasore set herself ablaze on the campus July 12 and died at AIIMS Bhubaneswar on the night of July 14. Similarly, a 15-year-old girl of Puri was set afire allegedly by three miscreants. She is now under treatment at

AIIMS, New Delhi.

Alleging that these incidents have exposed the failure of the system, the parties claimed that the State Commission for Women has remained non-functional for the last one year and over 11,000 complaints are pending with the panel.

“Continued inaction has deepened the crisis and left women and girls vulnerable across the state. We respectfully urge your Excellency to intervene using constitutional authority to ensure urgent and decisive action for justice and public safety,” the memorandum read.

Responding to the issue, the ruling BJP’s state vice-president Biranchi Tripathy said, “The Congress party is enacting a drama to gain political mileage. Their student wing president was arrested for raping a woman. We are waiting to see when they will hold such a protest march to provide justice to the victim.”

The state government is taking all necessary action against atrocities against women, he said.



During this monsoon, the state has received cumulative rainfall of 533.3 mm against its normal value of 466.7 mm

As the sea condition is expected to remain rough, it has advised fishermen not to venture into the sea till July 27.

During this monsoon period (June 1 to July 24), the state has received cumulative rainfall of 533.3 mm against its normal value of 466.7 mm. Ten districts have received excess rainfall, while 17 districts received normal downpour and the remaining three districts put under deficient category by the IMD.

Another reshuffle of IAS officers

Bhubaneswar: Outgoing BMC Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil has been appointed as Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Co-operation department as the state government announced fresh postings for another batch of more than 13 IAS officers Thursday. According to a notification issued by the General Administration & Public Grievance (GA&PG) department, Patil has been allowed to remain in additional charge as Special Secretary, Housing & Urban Development and Chairman, Odisha State Warehousing Corporation. Similarly, Bijay Ketan Upadhyaya, while continuing as Director, Odia Language, Literature & Culture, will also remain in charge as Secretary of the department. Samarth Verma has been appointed as Director, Minor Minerals, Bhubaneswar with additional charge as MD of Odisha Film Development Corporation. The Post of Director of Minor Minerals has been elevated to Additional Secretary level, the notification read. Deepankar Mohapatra was appointed as CEO, Hockey Promotion Council, Odisha. The post has been declared equivalent to Joint Secretary level. Apart from that new Sub-Collectors have been appointed in nine districts. The latest postings follow an earlier reshuffle of 49 senior IAS officers earlier this week.

Leopard skin seized in City; two arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Police Thursday arrested two wildlife criminals and recovered a leopard skin from their possession.

According to STF sources, acting on an intelligence input, a raid was conducted by an STF team near New Infolvalley Road in Bhubaneswar against illegal possession of wildlife products.

During the raid, Rajesh Nayak, 26, and Gangadhar Nayak, 25, both residents of Nayagarh district, were apprehended.

One leopard skin and other incriminating materials were recovered from their possession.

The accused duo failed to produce any valid authorisation for possessing the leopard skin. Consequently, they were arrested and forwarded to the Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM), Bhubaneswar.

A case has been registered against them under Sections



303(2), 317(2), and 61(2)(a) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, read with Section 51 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

The seized leopard skin will be sent to the Director of Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, for biological examination, according to STF sources.

Child Help Centres at rail stations, bus stands soon

Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja reviews child protection systems; calls for collective efforts and stronger inter-departmental coordination for holistic child protection and care



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: The state-level child protection welfare monitoring and review committee met Thursday at Lok Seva Bhawan, chaired by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja. Officials from various departments discussed plans to set up Child Help Centres at railway stations and bus stands across the state.

Ahuja emphasised on child protection and care through collective efforts of all departments, including Women and Child Development (WCD), School and Mass Education, Higher Education, Health and Family Welfare, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Home, Skill Development and Technical Education. He also directed district-level monitoring to be made more active.

Participants in the meeting discussed in detail the ongoing schemes, government mechanisms, and contributions of NGOs and institutions working in the field of child protection.

Special emphasis was laid on effective implementation of 'Mission Vatsalya' in the state. On the occasion, WCD director Monisha Banerjee made a comprehensive presentation on various institutional and non-institutional arrangements for child protection in the state.

Key national and state-level bodies such as the Mission Vatsalya Approval Board, Mission Vatsalya Central Project Monitoring Unit, State Child Protection Society, State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA), and the three-tier Child Welfare and Protection Committees at state, district, and gram panchayat levels are actively functioning in the state.

At present, Odisha has 30 District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), 31 Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), 34 Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), 36 dedicated Juvenile Police Units, and 220 Child Care Institutions (CCIs). About 8,150 children are under institutional care while 6,317 children are under non-institutional care.

The adoption trend in Odisha has shown steady growth over the past three years. Due to awareness, streamlined processes and strengthened systems in-country adoption has increased, with the adoption of girl children exceeding that of boys each year. Odisha has 160 children's homes, 33 specialised adoption agencies, 12 open shelters, 7 observation homes and 7 special homes.

Out of 8,150 children in CCIs, 98 per cent have been enrolled for Aadhaar. Currently, 672 children are pursuing vocational education and 8,130 individuals have undergone training through 264 different programmes. While 211 children have secured employment, 79 have become self-employed. The state also provides marriage assistance to children leaving institutional care.

Currently, 41 Child Help Units and State Control Room are functioning effectively to extend support to children in need. Financial assistance under the 'Ashirbad Yojana' is being provided to eligible children.

Other key focus areas discussed included mental health support and counseling for traumatised children, smart education through e-learning, video conferencing facilities for juvenile cases hearings and monthly financial aid for continuing education under 'Ashirbad Yojana'.

Mahima-Gosain Exp derails near Sambalpur

PNN & AGENCIES

Sambalpur/Bhubaneswar, July 24: A general coach of Mahima Gosain Express derailed near Sambalpur City railway station Thursday morning, triggering panic among passengers.

According to initial reports, the incident occurred just minutes before the train was scheduled to arrive at Sambalpur City Station.

The train was on its scheduled route from Bhubaneswar to Sambalpur when the derailment occurred.

The East Coast Railway (ECoR) sources revealed that the rear trolley of a general

coach next to the guard van of 20831 Shalimar-Sambalpur Express derailed near Sambalpur City Station.

A major accident was averted as the train was moving slowly.

"A minor derailment occurred this morning at 0922 hours. One trolley of a General Coach of Train No. 20831 Mahima Gosain Express, got off track. The train runs from Shalimar to Sambalpur. The incident took place in the Sambalpur City-Sambalpur section, shortly after the train departed from Sambalpur City at 0918 hours at a very slow speed," informed the ECoR in an official statement.

Railway officials, along with



personnel from the local police, rushed to the site and launched immediate rescue and restoration operations.

Fortunately, there has been no report of any injuries or casualties. Passengers were safely evacuated and the situation was brought under control swiftly.

The affected coach was decoupled, after which the train left for Sambalpur with all passengers on board.

Railway officials at the site were overseeing early restoration of traffic and inquiring about the causes behind the incident. In March, at least one passenger died while 15 others sustained serious injuries after 11 coaches of the 12551 Bengaluru Kamakhya AC Superfast Express derailed near Nergundi station in Cuttack district.

Around two years ago, the tragic train accident involving three trains occurred at Bahanaga in Balasore district of Odisha, killing over 290 people and injuring 1,000.

Income Tax dept Odisha marks 166th celebration

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: The Income Tax Department, Odisha region, celebrated its 166th Income Tax Day Thursday here at Sookhana Bhawan, blending ceremonial pride with community spirit.

Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Paramita Satapathy joined the event as chief guest. Other dignitaries included Principal Director of Income Tax (Investigation) Sandeep Goel, Principal Chief Commissioner of IT Saroj Kumar Mohapatra, and Commissioner of Income Tax (Admin & TPS) Shovan Krushna Sahu. In a video message, Central



Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chairman Ravi Agarwal highlighted the department's evolution. "The Income Tax Department is on a transformative journey towards greater transparency, simplification, and digitalisation," he said, while lauding the contribution of taxpayers to the nation's economic strength.

Speaking at the event, Satapathy said, "The department is

increasingly adopting a service-oriented approach, with an emphasis on voluntary compliance and enhanced taxpayer services."

The celebration featured a vibrant Chhau dance performance by the Mayor Art Group, an award ceremony honouring meritorious officers and employees, and the felicitation of renowned doctors from across Odisha for their social contributions.

A series of outreach programmes including a walkathon, a health camp, and a "Sit and Draw" competition for children of department staff were also held, underscoring the department's commitment to community welfare.

Job fair to link over 1,500 youth with opportunities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: A large-scale Apprenticeship-cum-Job Fair with walk-in interviews will be held Friday at the Regional College of Management (RCM), Bhubaneswar. Organised by the Ministry of Education (Board of Practical Training - Eastern Region) in collaboration with RCM and supported by the NHRD Bhubaneswar Chapter, the fair targets registered candidates from fields such as Management, Arts, Commerce, Engineering, and Nursing.

Over 1,500 candidates have registered for the event, which aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

"We're dedicated to helping deserving candidates find the right opportunities," said an official from the organising committee.

CM to hear public grievances July 28

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 24: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will conduct a public grievance hearing July 28 (Monday) from 8 AM onwards at the former Government Primary School near Capital Nursery, Unit-II, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar.

According to a statement issued by the General Administration and Public Grievances department, citizens wishing to present their grievances before the CM must register online through the Janasunani Portal (https://janasunani.odisha.gov.in). The registration process will commence July 25 and will continue until 1,000 registrations are received, after which it will be closed.

Patnaik questions govt's plan for negotiation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 24: A day after Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi stated that he favoured an 'amicable' settlement of the Mahanadi water dispute with Chhattisgarh, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Naveen Patnaik, Thursday questioned whether the state government has withdrawn from the legal route.

After a high-level meeting Wednesday, Majhi said that since the efforts being made to resolve the problem in the Central Water Commission are progressing slowly, it can be amicably resolved through negotiations between both states with the support of the Central government, according to a CMO statement.

Taking to social media, Patnaik, who is also a former chief



MAHANADI DISPUTE

minister during whose tenure the Mahanadi Water Tribunal was formed, said, "People deserve answers. Yesterday, Hon'ble CM Mohan Charan Majhi chaired a high-level meeting on the long-standing Mahanadi water dispute. As per the official press release and a post by the Advocate General, the focus was on resolving the issue through mutual agreement."

"But this raises some serious questions that cannot be brushed aside. What is the 'mutual agreement' being discussed? Mahanadi is Odisha's lifeline. The state's BJP government must urgently convene an all-party meeting to explain what kind of compromise is being considered or already decided with the BJP government in Chhattisgarh," he added.

Asking whether Odisha is withdrawing from the legal route, Patnaik said, "Will the state continue pursuing the case before the #Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal? Or is the government preparing to abandon the legal fight?"

Noting that there are only eight days until the next hearing of the tribunal August 2, the BJP president raised questions on the state's 'silence'.

"Why is there silence? Why hasn't the government taken stakeholders, political parties,

and the people into confidence? Is the state's BJP government secretly negotiating a settlement with another BJP govt, potentially to undermine #Odisha's water rights?" Patnaik asked.

Asserting that Mahanadi is not just a river, but the soul of Odisha, the former chief minister said that there must be transparency and accountability.

He also noted the chronology of the Mahanadi dispute and how a tribunal was formed after negotiations failed to reach any conclusion.

"It may be recalled that on January 23, 2018, the Hon'ble Supreme Court directed the Central government to constitute the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal, following the then state government's petition under the ISRWD Act, 1956, seeking adjudication of the dispute," he said.

BJD leader booked for rape, forced abortion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 24: A leader of the opposition BJD in Bhubaneswar was Thursday booked on the charge of raping a girl, police said.

The case was filed under the BNS Sections 64(2) (rape), 89 (committing miscarriage without woman's permission), 296 (obscene act), and 352 (criminal intimidation), besides Section 6 of the POCSO Act, at the Laxmisagar police station, where the survivor lodged a complaint Wednesday, they said.

The survivor, who is now 19, underwent medical examination at the Capital Hospital.

In her complaint, she alleged that the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) corporator built a physical relationship with her under the 'false promise' of marriage and made her pregnant when she was a minor.

She also alleged that the corporator forced her to terminate the pregnancy and promised her marriage after getting a divorce from his wife.

"When I asked him to marry me, he threatened and asked me to leave Bhubaneswar," she claimed.

The corporator is yet to be arrested. The BJD was not available for comment.

Govt begins drive to make campuses drug-free

Experts welcome Odisha's anti-drug push, warn of worsening campus drug culture

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 24: In a decisive move to combat the growing threat of drug abuse among students, the Higher Education department has issued a strong directive to all government and non-government aided colleges across the state, urging them to take proactive steps towards creating drug-free campuses.

The directive, issued by State Nodal Officer-cum-Deputy Secretary Ramesh Chandra Behera comes at a time when concerns about increasing drug consumption among young people are mounting across Odisha. The department has recognised educational institutions as critical spaces where early intervention and awareness can shape healthier futures for students.

"Educational institutions have a pivotal role in shaping responsible citizens. The current drug menace is a serious

social threat, and we must act now," the circular emphasised.

The government has outlined a comprehensive awareness strategy, which includes:

Promotion of the MANAS portal and helpline (1933)

Students and citizens can report drug use or seek help through the Narcotics Control Bureau's MANAS (Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System) portal. Complaints can be lodged via the national helpline (1933), the Umang mobile app, or through email. Importantly, the identity of complainants will remain confidential. Colleges have been asked to raise awareness

about this platform through seminars, posters, and digital campaigns.

NSS-driven anti-drug pledge movement

NSS (National Service Scheme) volunteers will lead the effort to encourage students and communities to take an e-pledge against drug use on the MyGov platform, reinforcing personal commitment to a drug-free life.

Student engagement activities

Institutions have been asked to organise sensitisation programmes such as debates, essay competitions, painting contests, street plays, and rallies to educate students on the dangers of substance abuse.

Experts raise voices over campus drug culture

Commenting on the initiative, anti-drug activist Muhammad Imran Ali, praised the government's direction but warned of the alarming ground reality.

"It's a welcome step, but the situation is already very grim. Drug mafias are openly targeting young people in and around colleges and universities. Brown Sugar, Cocaine, and even LSD have been seized in recent months. Our campuses are not any more immune," Ali stated.

"For drug traffickers, students become possible buyers—and sometimes even as carriers. This is not just a health issue. It's a criminal and moral crisis. While awareness is crucial, we must

ensure these guidelines are implemented effectively and backed by law enforcement," he added.

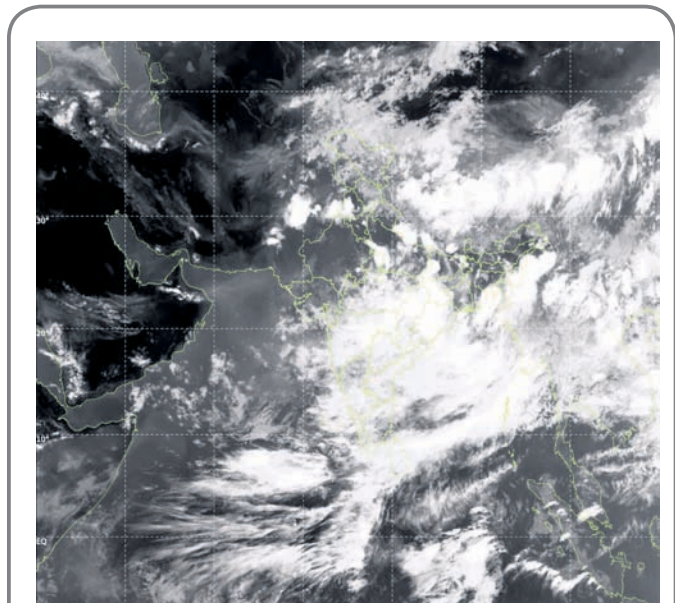
Amrit Pattojoshi, head of Psychiatry department at Hi-Tech Medical College, said the popular belief that drugs like cannabis, LSD, or stimulants enhance creativity, focus, or confidence is a dangerous myth. While these substances may temporarily alter mood or perception, scientific evidence shows the effects are short-lived and often come with serious long-term consequences.

"Long-term drug use harms core brain functions like memory, motivation, and decision-making, especially in young people whose brains are still developing," Pattojoshi said.

"Peer pressure, emotional struggles, and online glorification increase the risk—but with timely therapy and family support, recovery is possible," he added.



MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	86.42 ↑ 0.04	SENSEX	82184.17 ↓ 542.47	GOLD	₹98,768 ↑ ₹649
EURO	101.55 ↓ 0.13	NIFTY	25062.10 ↓ 157.80	SILVER	₹115,014 ↓ ₹620



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	30.2°	31.2°	Partly cloudy sky with possibility of heavy rain or Thunderstorm
Min Temp	25.1°	24.4°	
Humidity	89%	85%	
Rainfall	70.0mm	5.2mm	

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Stranded in Gandhamardhan, 17 Chh'garh tourists rescued

Paikamal, July 24: The Odisha Police rescued 17 tourists from Chhattisgarh, who were stranded on the Gandhamardhan Hills due to continuous heavy rainfall, in an overnight operation, officials said Thursday.

There were 13 women and four men in the group, who came here from Sarangarh-Bilaigarh district of Chhattisgarh, they said.

Sources said 21 pilgrims from Chhattisgarh had come on a visit to the Nrusinghanath temple under Paikamal block of Bargarh district. They visited the shrine and had darshan of the deity.

Later, four of them stayed back while 17 pilgrims began their trek from Nrusinghanath in Bargarh district to Harishankar in neighbouring Bolangir district Wednesday evening, said Niranjan Barik, a police officer engaged in the operation.

Due to inclement weather and poor visibility, they lost their way and were stranded on an elevated terrain overnight near the Balco quarry and failed to find way to the Harishankar temple in adjoining Bolangir district, he said. They informed one of their relatives Tiku Sahu, who in turn informed the police personnel.

Upon receiving information, the Bargarh district police and fire personnel began a rescue operation deploying a team of the District Voluntary Force with necessary food supplies, first-aid kits, and rescue gear, he said. However, heavy rainfall at night hampered the rescue operation.

Later, the team navigated through challenging terrain and reached the stranded group in the early hours, he added.

The tourists were provided with food and preliminary medical attention on-site. They were then safely escorted back to the base camp at Nrusinghanath, where a medical team further examined their condition, the officer said.

A few were administered minor medication by doctors as precautionary measures, he said.

SP Prahlad Sahai Meena personally supervised the rescue operation, while IGP (Northern Range) Himanshu Lal visited the site to oversee the rescue efforts, he said.



The rescued tourists and police personnel posing for a photo in a hilly area.

Woman arrested for murder bid on hubby

Belaguntha, July 24: A 19-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly trying to kill her husband in Sutamumara village under this police limits in Ganjam district.

The accused, Barsha Pradhan, married Amulya Dalei, 29, of the same village a month ago. According to police, Barsha called Amulya outside late July 21 on the pretext of using the toilet and allegedly pushed him into a well. When he cried for help, she reportedly struck him with a brick and tried to drown him using a bamboo pole. Hearing his screams, Amulya's father, Ganesh Dalei, rushed out and rescued him. The injured man was initially taken to Belaguntha CHC and later admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. Police seized evidence from the spot and recorded Amulya's statement. Barsha was arrested July 23 from an old-age home in Buguda and produced in court.

Sources said Barsha was unhappy with the marriage, as her husband was 10 years older and undergoing treatment for a medical condition.

Panic as high tide erodes Siali Beach

Erasama, July 24: Siali Beach, one of Jagatsinghpur district's major tourist destinations, has been severely battered by high tidal waves, triggering panic among residents of at least 25 coastal villages.

The powerful tidal surge struck late Tuesday night ahead of the new moon as waves breached the coastline and submerged large parts of the Siali beach area in Padmapur panchayat of Erasama block.

Meanwhile, the tidal waves crossed the jungle, high coastal embankment, the OTDC building and reached near Ramtara village Thursday, which is the new moon day. While, it came nearly 50 metre inland Wednesday, the tidal waves crossed around 20 metre into the beach, Thursday.

Water now seamlessly spans from the sea to the once-elevated coastal forest, raising fears of further erosion. Residents of 25 villages in Gadharishpur, Padmapur, Ambiki, Siali, Shankha, Nolia Sahi, Kalabedi and Ramtara panchayats are on high alert, with apprehension of further incursion by the sea and threat to their survival. Panic has gripped the villagers as they are fearful of an increasingly violent sea in coming days which might wipe out the villages.

According to the locals, the sea was around 50 metres away from the beach in 2005. However, the rising sea level has gradually brought the waters closer to the landmass.

Siali Beach has grown in popularity and tourists enjoy bathing here as it is known for its shallow shores much like Puri beach. Moreover, owing to safety and scenic views, the beach attracts tourists in large numbers.

Recognising its tourism potential, former minister late Damodar Rout, along with MLA Prashant Kumar Muduli and former BDO Muralidhar Swain, had initiated beautification projects. These included a sea-view tower, a tourist complex, a vehicle park and other infrastructure. They also started organising a beach festival (Belabhumi Mahotsav) every year.

The beach drew visitors from far and wide and was included in Odisha's official tourism map in 2014, bringing a wave of optimism to the local community.

However, no substantial long-term intervention has followed from the state government. As sea levels continue to rise unexpectedly, the erosion has reached alarming levels. The foundation of the view tower has weakened due to sand erosion, eventually forcing the administration to demolish it over safety concerns.

Coastal protection measures such as casuarina plantations, wire mesh barricades, and stone barriers have all been swallowed by the advancing sea.

This is not the first such incident. A high tide in early June also triggered panic and a youth died June 15 while bathing in the sea during the Raja festival.

Sukanta Samanta, a member of voluntary outfit Dolagobindajew Youth Association, criticised the inaction, "The Sagarmala project remains limited to paperwork. The sea's relentless advance now threatens the very survival of Erasama's coastal stretch."

Officials have yet to announce any concrete step to safeguard the beach or resettle vulnerable populations.



A view of Siali Beach showing significant erosion and water reaching inland.

Ex-Dharmasala MLA storms police station, frees accused

Jajpur/Kaema, July 24: District and order in Jajpur district came under sharp scrutiny after former Dharmasala MLA Pranab Kumar Balabantary allegedly stormed the Badachana police station late Wednesday night and forcibly took custody of an accused held in a criminal case.

The incident, which occurred around 2am, was caught on camera and later shared widely on social media by the former legislator's supporters. The video shows Balabantary allegedly entering the police station and removing the accused without legal sanction; a move that has sparked strong reactions from locals and political opponents.

According to police sources, the accused had been arrested in connection with a case involving attempted murder, criminal intimidation and abusive language. He was being held at the station for interrogation and was scheduled to be produced in court the next day after relevant charges were filed.

However, Balabantary allegedly used his political influence to enter the station and free the accused without following due process. BJP leaders have slammed the police, accusing them of taking the incident lightly and failing to uphold the rule of law.

Residents and civil society members have questioned why no immediate action has been taken against the former BJD legislator for breaching security protocols and obstructing justice. "If the police fail to act against such blatant interference, what message does it send to the public?" asked one local resident.

The viral video has intensified pressure on law enforcement officials, with many calling for departmental action against both the accused and those responsible for his unauthorised release.

In response to the backlash, Balabantary held a press conference, defending his actions. He claimed the person in question was his supporter, who had been picked up by police without justification. "I went to the station to ask why my supporter was detained. I spoke with the Badachana IIC and also contacted the SDPO for clarification," he said.

Balabantary further stated that he took the accused on personal surety and denied any wrongdoing or use of force. "There was no act of intimidation or pressure. I merely ensured that an innocent person was not wrongfully detained," he asserted.

Despite his defence, questions remain about the legality of his actions and the police's failure to prevent the unauthorised removal of a detainee. As the video continues to circulate online, public demand is growing for accountability and clarity on the next course of action.

High Court Notice

In the High Court of Jharkhand at Ranchi (Civil Miscellaneous Appellate Jurisdiction) Miscellaneous Appeal No. 416/2017 (Arising out of Award dt. 11.06.2025 passed Claim Case No. 212/2010 by The Presiding Officer, Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Tribunal, Dhanbad)

Branch Manager ICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited Through Dipankar Roy. Claimant/Appellants

Versus

Dulali Devi & Others Opposite Parties/Respondents

Notice to Respondent No.-03

M/s. National Transport, Station Road, Barbil, P.O. Barbil, P.S. Barbil, District - Keonjhar (Odisha).

Whereas it has not been possible to secure service of notice issued upon you in the abovementioned Miscellaneous Appeal at the address mentioned above.

You are hereby directed to ensure your appearance in person or through your Advocate on the next date fixable tentatively i.e. 11/08/2025 to show cause as to why the prayer in the instant miscellaneous appeal be not allowed or any order be passed by the Hon'ble Court, which it deems fit and proper.

Given under My hand and seal of this Day of 09/07/2025.

By order of the Court
Sd/-
Assistant Registrar

EAST COAST RAILWAY

NOTIFICATION FOR COMMISSION AGENT FOR BARITHENGARH (BRTG) & JENAPUR ROAD (JPRD) PASSENGER HALTS

No. G.51/P.H/BRTG & JPRD Date: 16.07.2025

Applications are invited from interested candidates for engagement as Commission Agent to sell tickets at: (1) Barithengarh (BRTG) Passenger Halt in between Byree (BY) and Dhanmandal (DNL) stations & (2) Jenapur Road (JPRD) Passenger Halt in between Delang (DEL) and Bargarh (BGR) stations under the jurisdiction of Khurda Road Division.

Commission Payable to the Halt Agent will be as under: ₹ 1/- to 15,000/-: 15%, ₹ 15,001/- to 50,000/-: 12%, ₹ 50,001/- to 1,00,000/-: 9%, ₹ 1,00,001/- to 2,00,000/-: 6%, ₹ 2,00,001/- and above: 3%

Security Deposit for the above Halts is ₹ 2,000/- (Two thousand) only which is to be deposited after selection.

N.B.: All Photostat copies enclosed with the application must be self-attested without which the application will be summarily rejected.

How to apply.: Candidates may apply in prescribed format given in Annexure-A for the above Passenger Halts to which they are eligible from place of residence point of view with the required documents to the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, East Coast Railway, Khurda Road, PO: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Pin-752050 and applications should be dropped in the Box kept for this purpose in the office of the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, East Coast Railway, Khurda Road, on any working day. Application sent through postal service or by any other means shall not be entertained.

Application duly filled in should reach the office of Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Khurda Road by 1500 hrs. on or before 13.08.2025 (Wednesday). If the last day i.e. 13.08.2025 happens to be or is declared to be a holiday, applications will be received by the same time on the next working day. All the received applications will be opened at 1530 hrs on 13.08.2025.

Applications received after due date & time shall not be entertained under any circumstances. After scrutiny of the applications, the candidates will be informed regarding the date of selection for appearing before the Selection Committee, if so required.

The Railway Administration reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason whatsoever.

For complete details, application format, other terms & conditions please visit website: www.eastrail.in

PR-394/Q/25-26 Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager / Khurda Road

NICSI Notice for Inviting Tender (NIT) MPVS

RFP for Selection of Managed Service Provider (MSP/SI) for Augmentation of IT Infrastructure at Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, Bhopal

GEM Bid No: GEM/2025/B/6382205 dt. 25-06-2025

NICSI invites proposals from Reputed Companies/ Managed Service Providers for Augmentation of IT Infrastructure, i.e. Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning & Maintenance of IT Infrastructure at Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, Bhopal. Interested Companies, who qualify as per the criteria mentioned in the tender document, may submit their Proposals online through GEM portal till 16/07/2025.

Please refer the tender document available at GEM portal with Bid Number: GEM/2025/B/6382205 dt. 25-06-2025 for detail Scope of Work, Other important details, corrigendum and other terms and conditions.

(General Manager)
NICSI

CBC 061071/1/0001/2526

Regional Office (Sambalpur Region), 1st Floor, G.M. College Chowk, Christian Para, Sambalpur-768001, Mob.: 7682829040

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE

It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, persons engaged in business of gold ornaments and general public that in spite of repeated notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues. Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including Up-to-date interest and all costs charges / expenses) by Dt. 11.08.2025, then from 11.08.2025, their pledged gold ornaments will be sold in public auction at **Respective Branch's Premises having details given herein below**. For this Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegations or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard. Bank reserves the right to cancel the auction without assigning any reasons in case, the bidding price so arrived at is observed to be below or inadequate. Further, if need be, Bank reserves the right to change the date, time and place of the above scheduled auction or cancel the same without assigning any reasons thereon. The purity & net weight & the floor price of the gold ornaments / coins etc. (item wise) will be made available to the intending bidders on the date and at the site of auction.

Sl. No.	Account Number	Name & Address of the Borrower	Gross Weight (In Grams)	Net Weight (In Grams)	Balance Outstanding as on 21.07.2025 plus Interest and charges thereon w.e.f. 21.07.2025 (Amount in Rs.)
SONEPUR BRANCH, 1st Floor, Main Road, Majhipada, Near Sonepur Police Station, Subarnapur, Odisha, PIN - 767017					
1.	34280500008495	Subal Bagarti, Matiapali, Chhakormal, Sonepur, Odisha, PIN-767068.	11.26	9.00	₹42,104.10
2.	34280500008368	Dayanidhi Sahu, S/o- Akura, At- Pravas Lodge, Main Road, P.O/PS.: Sonepur, Dist.: Subarnapur, Odisha, PIN - 767017.	13.23	11.20	₹51,633.85
3.	34280500008486	Maya Das, W/o- Sheshadev, At: Khadalpara, P.O.: Sonepur, Dist.: Subarnapur Odisha, PIN-767017	33.91	27.10	₹1,26,065.33
4.	34280500008182	Sujit Naik, S Kalapathar, Sonepur, Odisha, PIN-767017	37.80	32.00	₹1,41,730.77
PHULBANI BRANCH, Ram Mandir Road, Hatapada, Kandhamal, Odisha, PIN - 762001					
5.	35430600001808	Ranjita Mahalinga, D/o- Sri Prameswar Mahalinga, At: Hatapada, P.O.: Kandhamal, P.S.: Phulbani, Dist.: Pahalmani, Odisha, PIN - 762001.	35.97	30.67	₹1,50,177.99
KANTABANJI BRANCH, 1st Floor, Radha Rukmini Complex, Near Annapurna Hotel, Dist.: Balangir, Odisha, PIN - 767039					
6.	35440500003326	Ghasi Kumbhar, S/o- Bhakaranand Kumbhar, At: Makhapali, P.O.: Patrapali, P.S.: Bangomunda, Dist.: Bolangir, Odisha, PIN - 767037.	11.65	11.50	₹52,657.59
KESINGA BRANCH, Near Saraswati Shishu Vidya Mandir, Bhawanipatna Road, Ward No. 08, Kalahandi, Odisha, PIN-766012					
7.	40730600000743	Sambhu Bag, S/o- Gobinda Bag, Ward No. 6, Kesinga, Kalahandi, Odisha, PIN - 766012	11.47	9.05	₹35,886.66
8.	40730600000744	Sambhu Bag, S/o- Gobinda Bag, Ward No. 6, Kesinga, Kalahandi, Odisha, PIN - 766012	31.76	25.70	₹1,16,888.62
PANPOSH BRANCH, ITI Chawk, Near Raghunathpally, Panposh Road, Rourkela, Odisha, PIN-769012.					
9.	41820600002249	Pramod Kumar Jena, M/52, Kalinga Vihar, Chhend, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundargarh, Odisha, PIN-769015.	59.41	39.41	₹1,63,570.26
TALCHER BRANCH, Ground Floor, Plot No.: 1629/3294, Talcher, Dist.: Angul, Odisha, PIN-759100					
10.	43980600001651	Nitin Chandra Pradhan, S/o-Nirod Kumar Pradhan, 115/3, Handidhwa Talcher Angul, Odisha, PIN-759100.	91.35	72.50	₹3,05,766.62
DHARAMGARH BRANCH, Infront of Sub Registrar Office, Dharamgarh, Kalahandi, Odisha, PIN-766015					
11.	44000600005855	Jagadish Sa, S/o- Madhu Sa, Ichhapur, P.O.: Boden, Dharamgarh, Kalahandi, Odisha, PIN-766015	15.00	12.00	₹67,096.00
MALKANGIRI BRANCH, BDO Office, Malkangiri, Odisha, PIN - 764048					
12.	46560600001694	Tripathi Gouda, S/o- Sri Trinath Gouda, Kaniyasram, Mahendri, Malkangiri, Odisha, PIN-764072	9.73	8.50	₹47,795.39
13.	46560600001675	Bipul Bairagi, MV 24, Malkangiri, Odisha, PIN - 764045	10.92	8.80	₹50,893.56
14.	46560500000237	Dillip Kumar Behera, S/o- Abhimanyu Behera, Sibaram Street, Baulagam, Ganjam, Odisha, PIN-761026.	53.50	43.50	₹1,78,553.80
GUNUPUR BRANCH, Sairam Complex, Balram Nagar, Parlekhamundi Road, Dist.: Rayagada, Odisha, PIN-765022					
15.	46590600002210	Rita Katapali, Manmatpur, Gunpur, Odisha, PIN-765022	37.77	33.50	₹1,84,855.02
BAUDHGARH BRANCH, Shivani Market Complex, Town Hall Road, Baudh, Odisha, PIN-762014					
16.	46620500001472	Rabindra Meher, At: Jagati, P.O.: Jagati, Baudhgarh, Odisha, PIN - 762014.	14.60	12.48	₹48,206.03
KHETRAJUPUR BRANCH, Poddar Heights, Main Road, Khetrajpur, Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN- 768003					
17.	52370600001834	Mangraj Bhata, Dakdarapada, Jayantpur, Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN - 768112	34.30	27.00	₹1,72,712.51
UMARKOTE BRANCH, Gulipatna, Umarkote, Dist.: Nabarangpur, Odisha, PIN- 764063					
18.	52720500000860	Ganesh Chandra Pujari, Nera High School, Umarkote, Nabarangpur, Odisha, PIN - 764073.	26.20	20.40	₹97,669.18
TITLAGARH BRANCH, Jainshoppi Municipality Office, Titlagarh, Dist.: Bolangir, Odisha, PIN - 767033					
19.	59390500003388	Kunjabihari Tandi, Vill: Ghanabahal, P.O.: Malishira, G.P.: Bitabandh, Block-Titlagarh, Dist.: Bolangir, Odisha, PIN - 767037	16.15	13.66	₹62,938.70
VJ BALANGIR BRANCH, Chandrasekar Nagar, Patnagarh Road, Dist.: Bolangir, Odisha, PIN - 767001.					
20.	80450500000595	Kishor Kumbhar, Brahmanidungari, G.P.: G S Durguripali, Bolangir, Odisha, PIN-767024	12.86	12.30	₹54,233.17
21.	80450500000613	Durbasa Patra, C/o- Manohar Patra, Deng Burda, Bolangir, Odisha, PIN- 767032.	22.23	21.14	₹36,691.51

Place: Sambalpur
Date : 24.07.2025

Regional Manager,
Bank of Baroda

Interstate snatching gang busted; 13 held

Keonjhar, July 24: Police here have busted an interstate organised crime gang and arrested 13 members allegedly involved in multiple gold chain snatching cases and other property crimes across Odisha and neighboring states.

The gang was tracked during an investigation into a chain snatching complaint filed by Gayatri Patra July 16 near DN High School in Keonjhar. According to police, the suspects were part of a notorious group engaged in theft, robbery, and dacoity across several states.

"A team led by Sub-Inspector Dillip Kumar Murmu arrested 13 accused after raids in various locations," said Srikanta Sahu, IIC, Keonjhar Town police station. "The gang had bases in Dasamania, Mundamala, and Purbakote in Jajpur district, and extended its network to West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Chhattisgarh."

Police seized eight motorcycles, empty liquor bottles, plastic glasses, and other materials used in the crimes. The gang committed nine chain snatching incidents within 90 minutes July 16. They allegedly transported stolen gold to their native villages for distribution.

The suspects confessed to involvement in more than 200 property-related offenses. They operated in a coordinated manner, using high-speed bikes and targeting women during evening hours.

All were presented before the SDJM Court, Keonjhar, July 24.

Diarrhoea situation under control: Ganjam admin

Berhampur: The Health department Thursday claimed that the diarrhoea situation in Ganjam district has improved and is now under control. The situation is under control and no fresh case has been reported in the last two days in the village, Pramod Kumar Prusty, ADM, Ganjam, said. The water-borne disease had broken out at Damapur village under Sanakhemundi block, claiming the lives of three persons, while four others were admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur for treatment, officials said.

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

LONGER COAST, DEEPER CRISIS



India's coastline revision should blend science, local wisdom, and resilient infrastructure, ensuring community needs are central to effective solutions. If we delay, rising seas may irreversibly reshape our future

18 million people. For India, protecting them is a strategic necessity.

While there have been commendable initiatives like the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) programme and the CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone) notifications, implementation often remains reactive, fragmented, and lacking local participation. In many coastal states, the environmental clearance process is weakened by competing development pressures. Moreover, the benefits of ecosystem services like shoreline stabilisation, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity protection are rarely accounted for in cost-benefit analyses for infrastructure or industry. Grey infrastructure like seawalls and dikes offers protection but is costly and harms ecosystems. Pairing it with green solutions such as mangroves, reefs, wetlands, and dunes ensures more resilient and eco-friendly outcomes. The idea of "planned retreat" remains politically sensitive but will become inevitable for highly exposed low-lying areas.

Community voices are crucial in climate adaptation strategies. Fisherfolk, farmers, and indigenous groups hold valuable traditional knowledge that can complement scientific planning. India's coastline revision should blend science, local wisdom, and resilient infrastructure, ensuring community needs are central to effective solutions. If we delay, rising seas may irreversibly reshape our future.

Ansuman Das is a Department of Atomic Energy Fellow and Pranaya Kumar Swain is an Associate Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, NISER, Bhubaneswar.

India's coastline, long measured at 7,516.6 km, has now been officially revised to 11,098.81 km. This substantial increase is not just a technical adjustment in national cartography; it is a clear signal of the changing relationship between land and sea, shaped by accelerating climate change and improved geospatial assessments. The consequences of this redefinition are far-reaching: more people, infrastructure, and ecosystems are now recognised as being at risk from rising seas, coastal erosion, saline intrusion, and intensifying cyclonic storms. This revision stems from high-resolution satellite mapping conducted by the National Hydrographic Office (NHO), using a 1:250,000 scale, a stark improvement over the older charts from the 1970s, which failed to capture intricate features such as estuaries, tidal creeks, offshore islands, and backwaters. What emerges is not merely a clearer picture of India's geography but a reality that our shores are in flux.

But the real story lies beyond the numbers. Villages like Satbhaya in Odisha, where six hamlets have been swallowed by the Bay of Bengal, are not rare outliers. In 2018, over 571 families were relocated to Bagapatia, an inland rehabilitation colony 12 km from the sea, as their homes disappeared under advancing tides. Today, they continue to adapt to unfamiliar geographies, altered livelihoods, and disrupted social networks. This displacement is not just physical but deeply sociological. It echoes what British sociologist Anthony Giddens described as the dynamic between structure and agency. While rising seas and state policies represent structural forces beyond individual control, displaced communities exercise agency by reshaping their daily lives, rebuilding homes, forming new

support systems, and finding ways to sustain themselves in unfamiliar terrain. Their resilience is not merely economic but also social, rooted in how they reconstruct identity, belonging, and community amid disruption. Similar patterns are seen in the Sundarbans, Kuttanad, and parts of Tamil Nadu's coast, where coastal degradation has created climate refugees with little legal recognition or policy support.

Between 2008 and 2018, India recorded an annual average of 3.6 million disaster-related displacements, largely driven by monsoon floods and cyclones. With climate projections estimating up to 1.4 meters of sea-level rise by 2100, large stretches of India's low-lying coasts, including parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat, could face chronic inundation. The 2023 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) synthesis report warns that Asia's densely populated deltas are among the world's most vulnerable regions. India's coastal belt supports 170 million people, key cities like Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, and vital infrastructure. But sea-level rise threatens ecosystems like

mangroves and reefs, while damaging farms, fisheries, and coastal assets.

It worsens salinity, reduces freshwater, and hits vulnerable groups the hardest. Women often walk longer for clean water, manage food scarcity, and cope with disrupted health. Despite these realities, India currently lacks a formal policy framework for climate-induced displacement. There is no dedicated legal recognition or compensation pathway for those forced to migrate not due to political conflict or economic distress, but because the sea has erased their land. One of the strongest natural defenses India has and continues to overlook is mangroves. Mangroves act as green shields, absorbing up to 66% of wave energy within the first 100 meters and storing four times more carbon than tropical rainforests. A 2023 UNEP report estimated that over half the world's mangroves are at risk, and India's east coast, especially in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and the Sundarbans, due to development projects, aquaculture farms, road expansion, and even tourism. Mangrove loss isn't just ecological, it's economic. They prevent \$80 billion in flood damage yearly and shield over



Ansuman Das & Pranaya Kumar Swain

MANGROVE LOSS ISN'T JUST ECOLOGICAL, IT'S ECONOMIC. THEY PREVENT \$80 BILLION IN FLOOD DAMAGE YEARLY AND SHIELD OVER 18 MILLION PEOPLE



Hermione Dace

Strengthening agricultural resilience is not just a development issue; in an age of escalating climate-related disasters, it is a geopolitical imperative

Climate-Driven Hunger

In the first half of 2025, nearly 20,000 people crossed the English Channel to the United Kingdom in small boats – a 48 per cent increase from the same period last year. In Greece, arrivals from Libya have surged by 173% since the beginning of 2024.

Seeking to curb migration, Western leaders are bolstering border enforcement and striking deals with transit countries. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has called for stronger border controls across the continent, and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has vowed to "smash the gangs" facilitating illegal crossings.

While the number of international migrants has nearly doubled since 1990, today's migration pressures are just a glimpse of what lies ahead, as climate change threatens to accelerate displacement sharply. Leaders alarmed by current trends must recognize that these are merely early tremors. Reactive, short-term restrictions will be wholly inadequate to stem the rising tide of people displaced by climate-driven conflicts and disasters.

Instead, governments must confront the root causes of migration. Chief among them is food insecurity, which is rising globally as climate change severely disrupts agricultural production. Nowhere is this more acute than in Africa, which has just experienced its warmest decade on record. In 2023, Kenya suffered its worst drought in 40 years. The following year, Southern Africa faced its most severe drought in at least a century, reducing maize harvests in Zambia and Zimbabwe by more than half. Meanwhile, devastating floods in South Sudan wiped out more than 30 million farm animals in 2024.

These disruptions are harbingers of a more volatile future marked by increasingly frequent and severe climate shocks. If current trends persist, Africa's crop yields could fall by 18% by 2050, while the continent's population is projected to double by 2070. Elsewhere, too, agricultural productivity is faltering just when it must rise sharply to meet growing demand.

The ripple effects of climate change will not stop at national borders. Climate-driven food insecurity is already one of the main forces driving record-high migration from rural areas to urban centers. As harvests fail and extreme weather destroys livelihoods, more people will be forced to leave their homes in search of safety, stability, and opportunity. Growing competition over dwindling resources is bound to trigger political instability and violent conflict, further fueling migration pressures.

With collapsing food systems already straining governments and testing the resilience of international cooperation, investing in climate-resilient agriculture is the most effective way to ensure global stability. For Western leaders, that means taking concrete steps to expand climate-resilient agriculture abroad, from deploying early warning systems and scaling up drought-resistant crops to promoting agroecological practices that provide protection against extreme weather events.

But making these solutions widely accessible will require dismantling the financial and technical barriers that leave farmers without the tools, knowledge, and capital they need to adapt.

To this end, policymakers and international financial institutions must focus on interventions that can be rapidly scaled. For example, sharing satellite and meteorological data would strengthen early warning systems – a vital resource that enables farmers and governments to take timely, preventive action to protect harvests.

Yet these systems remain out of reach for roughly 60% of Africa's population. To close this gap, the international community must support regional training hubs and model farms that demonstrate appropriate agroecological practices. Equipping farmers with such expertise will enhance local resilience and help de-risk private investment in innovative agricultural technologies, especially when combined with blended finance tools and public guarantees.

At the same time, Western governments and multilateral organizations must reverse the decade-long decline in public funding for agricultural research and development, which has weakened the global innovation pipeline just as climate risks intensify. As the Tony Blair Institute's latest paper notes, although research into climate-resilient crops is advancing in high-income countries, it often fails to reach farmers in emerging economies, where commercial incentives are limited.

One promising solution is advance market commitments – a mechanism that enables governments and international institutions like the World Bank to create a market for specific products by pledging to purchase or subsidize them once they are developed. Applying this model to climate-resilient crops could help unlock the investment needed to scale them, benefiting farmers in Africa and beyond.

With population growth driving up demand for agricultural land, today's food systems cannot meet tomorrow's needs without bold innovation and political will. To keep pace, regulatory frameworks must become more agile, allowing for faster approval and adoption of next-generation technologies like precision agriculture, gene-edited crops, and alternative animal feeds. As global demand for solutions rises, countries that act early will be best positioned to capture the resulting economic gains.

Strengthening agricultural resilience is not just a development issue; in an age of escalating climate-related disasters, it is a geopolitical imperative. Fortifying borders in the face of growing migration and asylum claims remains a costly and ineffective stand-in for tackling the deeper drivers of displacement, instability, and food insecurity. Without a fundamentally different approach, today's migration pressures will spiral into a crisis that no government can contain.

The writer is a Policy Adviser at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.
PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected.
STEVE JOBS

Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without deep thought and hard work.
JRD TATA

Nothing is too wonderful to be true, if it be consistent with the laws of nature.
MICHAEL FARADAY

SPECTRUM COOPERATION

Transatlantic conditional synergy

Understanding the European Union's "strategic autonomy" as cutting itself off from the US and building self-sufficiency in all sectors would be not only costly but also extremely difficult in practice. It would mean, among other things, a voluntary delay in access to key technologies that Europe currently lacks. Instead of cutting itself off from America, Brussels has chosen an approach that could be described as "strategic synergy," which, however, is conditional: where possible, the EU cooperates with Washington, and where turbulence threatens, it invests in its own resources.

The "conditional synergy" strategy gained significance with the return to the White House of Donald J. Trump and his slogan "America First!" The new administration has already raised EU tariffs on steel and aluminium to 50% and is announcing a review of further tariffs. This "conditional synergy" allows Europe to continue to benefit from the world's most important innovation ecosystem while simultaneously creating a buffer against Washington's protectionist tendencies. Companies operating on

both sides of the Atlantic benefit from access to the two largest innovation markets, but they must also comply with different regulatory regimes. Managing this "dichotomy" – simultaneously meeting European and American requirements for AI, data, and supply chain security – is becoming a key strategic competence for companies. A similar situation exists in politics.

On the one hand, we have the Trade & Technology Council (TTC), where work is underway on common transatlantic standards for AI. The EU's InvestAI initiative, announced in February 2025, mobilizes €200 billion for European "AI gigafactories," with American cloud and hardware suppliers remaining key partners. The Defence Production Action Plan, in effect within NATO, allows allies to pool orders – for example, for 155mm ammunition, thereby shortening delivery times and lowering prices.

On the other hand, the EU is seeking to protect itself where the risk of permanent dependence on the US is greatest. Thus, we have the EU Chips Act (September 2023), which allocates 43 billion in public funds to establish a full semi-

conductor production chain in Europe.

From January 1 to June 30, 2025, Poland led the work of the EU Council under the slogan "Security, Europe." Among the achievements of the Polish Presidency are, on the one hand, agreeing on a negotiating mandate for the European Defence Industrial Support Programme (EDIP) with a budget of €1.5 billion for 2025-2027, and also consistently promoting dialogue with the US, including within the TTC, EU and NATO.

On June 24-25, 2025, NATO leaders – including Trump – met in The Hague. "It is simply inconceivable that Russia, whose economy is 25 times smaller than NATO member states, could outperform us in ammunition and weapons production," said NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at the time.

The allies adopted a Declaration that allocates a total of 5% of each member's GDP to security by 2035: 3.5% for core defence capabilities and 1.5% for cyber security, dual-use infrastructure, and long-term support for Ukraine.

The Artificial Intelligence Act, published in the EU Official Journal on July 12, 2024, will enter into force in stages.

Absolute prohibitions (Article 5) will apply from February 2025; requirements for high-risk systems will apply from August 2026. In February 2025, investors received an additional boost – Commission President Ursula von Leyen announced the InvestAI initiative in Paris, with a funding potential of up to €200 billion, which aims to accelerate the development of underlying models and computing infrastructure.

In practice, the European economy and the American innovation ecosystem today form interconnected vessels. Therefore, the key business competency is not maximising "autonomy," but rather flexibly balancing between the strict EU regulatory framework and the American culture of speed and experimentation. Companies that design their products from the outset to meet both sets of legal requirements – while simultaneously building multi-vector supply chains – will gain an advantage when subsequent political tensions once again push the boundaries of cooperation.

The writer is President, Centre for International Relations, Poland.
INFIA



Malgorzata Bonikowska

INSTEAD OF CUTTING ITSELF OFF FROM AMERICA, BRUSSELS HAS CHOSEN AN APPROACH THAT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS 'STRATEGIC SYNERGY'

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

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Cautious optimism

Sir, This refers to "India resumes issuing tourist visas to Chinese," Orissa POST, Jul 24. India's decision to resume issuing visas to Chinese nationals, for the first time since the 2020 Galwan clashes, marks a cautiously optimistic step toward restoring normalcy in strained bilateral ties. This move signals a subtle recalibration from both New Delhi and Beijing, hinting at a willingness to re-engage diplomatically while navigating unresolved border tensions. India's challenge in managing China remains uniquely complex. While geopolitical frictions continue—especially along the Line of Actual Control—economic interdependence is undeniable. India relies heavily on Chinese imports for electronics, machinery, and raw materials, and sees potential in leveraging this relationship to strengthen its manufacturing sector and market competitiveness. The visa resumption reflects a nuanced stance: Delhi is willing to explore economic engagement while firmly asserting its strategic red lines. The two countries, despite disagreements, are linked by trade, labor synergies, cultural exchanges, and a shared appreciation for food, tea, and technology. While normalization won't be swift, this diplomatic gesture could serve as a building block in crafting a more stable, mutually beneficial relationship—rooted in pragmatism, but not blind to security concerns.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Waning influence

Sir, The United States has once again decided to withdraw from UNESCO under Donald Trump's administration. This marks a repeat of the 2017 decision during Trump's first term, which had been reversed by Joe Biden in 2023. The White House has cited misaligned diplomatic interests, alleging that UNESCO promotes divisive agendas. The move further decreases the United States' influence in international organizations, and experts say the nation's exit will allow China to increase its clout on the UN system. The US's withdrawal may weaken international collaboration on key issues like education access and heritage protection. In a world where infectious diseases, climate change, and misinformation spread across borders with alarming speed, the need for global scientific collaboration has never been more urgent. And yet, the US has announced its intention to withdraw from UNESCO.
Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

FROM RUINS TO RESPLENDE Teacher inspires entire village to transform school in Meghalaya

With no funds or materials, the children and their teacher, Batskhem Thabab, improvised. Bamboo tubes replaced plastic pencil cases, areca palm leaves became lunch plates, and outdoor activities became classroom tools. Science lessons merged with gardening and language was taught through storytelling and songs



It took the entire village to rebuild the school, but it began with a single man who sparked the desire among them to act. Today, Raibah is no longer just a village with a school; it is a community transformed

PYNSHAUNG DOHLING | VILLAGE HEADMAN, RAIBAH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mawsynram, July 24: In the remote village of Raibah, nestled in the misty foothills of Mawsynram, known as the wettest place on Earth, an eerie silence used to surround a dilapidated school building a few years ago, but now the joyful whoops of children echo through the dewy air there.

The transformation was made possible by the efforts of a newly appointed teacher who not only performed physical labour, but also inspired the villagers, as well as others, to take part in making the school, which turned 75 this year, beautiful again.

When Batskhem Thabab was posted to the Raibah Government Lower Primary School in 2021, he found a place long abandoned by learning.

Its walls were cracked, windows damaged, the roof was leaking under monsoon downpours, and classrooms overtaken by shrubs after nearly two years of Covid-19-induced closure.

The school had no permanent staff and a handful of children turned up sporadically.

Rather than request a transfer, the young teacher chose to stay and reconstruct it from scratch. He began cleaning the grounds with the help of children, planted flowers to make

the compound colourful, and even paid the salary of a second teacher from his own earnings to help manage the institute.

"I knew this wasn't going to be easy. But I also knew that even the smallest step could spark something big," said Thabab, who had previously volunteered in rural education camps as a National Service Scheme (NSS) student and worked as a tour guide across Meghalaya,

witnessing the gaps in far-flung places.

Thabab's dream was to turn Raibah into a "green school," where sustainability and education could grow hand in hand. His early efforts, though modest—sweeping, gardening, encouraging hygienic practices—began changing the atmosphere.

The students responded enthusiastically, taking re-

infrastructure, the structure posed real danger, especially during the long, punishing monsoon.

Recognising the urgent need for repairs, Thabab contacted a friend, Ibarihun Majaw, who had successfully led a crowdfunding campaign during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along with two fellow educators, Majaw visited Raibah and saw the conditions firsthand.

Majaw launched a campaign on a crowdfunding platform and the goal was met within a week. A local entrepreneur also pitched in to install a new roof for the school building.

With logistical support from Shillong and hands-on help from the community, the school underwent a remarkable change. Villagers brought in materials, constructed bamboo fencing, and cleaned the area. Even residents with no school-going children participated.

"We rebuilt it together. It became a school of the people," said Bah Thongni, a villager.

Coastal charm to tech ambition: Goa rolls out AI Mission 2027

AGENCIES

Panaji, July 24: The Pramod Sawant government has rolled out Goa AI Mission 2027, a visionary roadmap to build an inclusive and future-ready Artificial Intelligence ecosystem officials said.

The mission, a bold leap from Goa's laid-back coastal charm to cutting-edge tech ambition, aims to empower people, enhance governance and spark innovation across sectors, placing the state firmly on the digital transformation map, they said.

In a recently held meeting, Chief Minister Sawant and state Information Technology Minister Rohan Khaunte appealed to stakeholders to work towards drafting the AI Mission 2027, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

Nearly 350 Information Technology companies and startups are operating in Goa, as per data from the IT department.

Goa Information and Technology Director Kabir Shirgaonkar told PTI Videos that the state government's AI mission is derived from the Centre's ambitious India AI Mission.

"We intend to meet various objectives through this mission, and one of them is create an inclusive and future-friendly AI ecosystem to empower citizens, enhance governance and support innovation across sectors," he said.

The government's predominant focus under the Goa AI Mission 2027 would be on setting up Graphic Processing Units (GPUs) to increase compute capacity, Shirgaonkar said.

Shirgaonkar said the ethical use of AI will also be a major focus area as the Goa government moves forward.

"As you know, language models are essential, and developing a Konkani LLM will be one of our key priorities. We aim to use AI to preserve and promote Goa's cultural and linguistic heritage through this locally built LLM in Konkani," he said.

Tourist tsunami: Goa greets 54L in 6 months

The state has seen a record-breaking surge in domestic and international tourists, with 54.55L visitors - including 51.84L domestic and 2.71L international tourists - between January and June 2025



AGENCIES

Panaji, July 24: For many Indians, Goa is more than just a destination - it's a dream vacation that often takes years to plan. But when it finally happens, the experience is always worth the wait. Whether it's dancing on the beach, being mesmerised by the serene backwaters, enjoying late-night karaoke, or indulging in mouthwatering seafood, it's no surprise that travellers are flocking in like never before.

According to the state tourism department, Goa has seen a record-breaking surge in domestic and international tourists, with 54.55 lakh visitors - including 51.84 lakh domestic and 2.71 lakh international tourists - between January and June 2025, reported PTI.

The state tourism department spokesperson stated that January saw the highest number of tourist arrivals, with a total of 10.56 lakh visitors, including 9.86 lakh domestic and nearly 70,000 international. February saw 9.05 lakh tourists, including 8.44 lakh from India

GOA'S HIDDEN GEMS

Vainguinim Beach: A colourful and serene beach with clear blue water and white sand, perfect for a peaceful escape from crowds.

Divar Island: A hidden gem accessible only by ferry, featuring a single land road with ancient temples built before the Portuguese invasion.

Butterfly Beach: A beach shaped like a butterfly, located near Palolem, great for dolphin sightings and stunning sunsets.

Galgibaga Beach: One of the cleanest beaches in Goa, a nesting site for endangered Olive Ridley turtles.

and over 61,000 international visitors, followed by March, which recorded 8.89 lakh tourists, with 8.32 lakh domestic and around 56,000 international.

The official further stated that April saw 8.42 lakh visitors, including 8.14 lakh domestic and 28,000 international arrivals, followed by 9.27 lakh tourists in May, comprising 8.97 lakh domestic and nearly 30,000 foreign

visitors. June recorded 8.34 lakh total arrivals, with 8.08 lakh domestic and around 25,000 international visitors.

What's Driving The Surge?

Director of Tourism Kedar Naik said that the rise in tourists is a result of the state's efforts to improve its infrastructure. The state has worked on expanding and modernising airport facilities, improving transport services, and developing new hotels and resorts.

Goa's presence at national and international travel trade fairs, its emphasis on cultural and monsoon tourism, spiritual circuits, and hinterland trails - coupled with the hosting of large-scale festivals and sporting events - has helped attract a wide spectrum of travelers, he said.

Top Attractions In Goa

One of the most iconic spots in Goa is Calangute Beach, also known as the Queen of Beaches. It's the largest beach in North Goa and is popular for water sports and nightlife.

If anyone is looking for party scenes and flea markets, then they can visit Baga and Anjuna Beaches. If you want a peaceful beach with a breathtaking sunset, then consider Palolem Beach in South Goa.

Other attractions include Chapora Fort, which offers panoramic views of Vagator Beach and the Arabian Sea; the UNESCO World Heritage Site Basilica of Bom Jesus, which holds the remains of St Francis Xavier; and one of the tallest waterfalls in India, known as Dudhsagar Falls.



Indian Coast Guard's (ICG) 'Samudra Prachet', a pollution control vessel designed by Goa Shipyard Limited to help the ICG respond to oil spills in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), being launched in Goa

Farmers bet on watermelons in warming Meghalaya

With climate challenges prompting innovation in farming practices, watermelon cultivation in Mynriang may well hold the seeds of a more resilient agricultural future

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



discovered only a few years ago that the fruit grows well in the region's soil and climate.

Since then, it has rapidly gained popularity as an alternative to labour-intensive crops that are also vulnerable to pests and diseases.

"This year, more and more farmers have taken to watermelon farming. It's not just profitable - it's also part of

their adaptation to shifting rainfall patterns and rising temperatures," said the agriculture officer for the area.

"We are encouraging mixed cropping like watermelon with broom grass, which supports both soil health and income security," the officer said.

On the issue of pricing and market access, the officer added, "We are working on link-

ing farmers with Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and exploring the possibility of direct-to-market models to eliminate middlemen."

Planted during March-April, watermelons typically take about three months to mature and are harvested until August, according to local farmer.

"It grows well here and is naturally sweet," he said. However, while the produce has been promising, farmers are grappling with a lack of fair pricing.

"We sell at Rs 35, but in the market, it goes up to Rs 80. We do all the hard work, but the middlemen walk away with most of the profits," he rued, urging the government to intervene with marketing support.

Farmers have also suggested that a watermelon festival be organised in the region to promote the crop and attract better market linkages.

Meghalaya's plastic war nets more than 2 tonnes in raids

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, July 24: Acting on the Meghalaya High Court's directions to intensify enforcement of the nationwide ban on single-use plastic, authorities across the state have seized over two metric tonnes of banned plastic items in a series of surprise inspections this year, officials said Thursday.

The Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board (MSPCB) said the ban on single-use plastic and plastic items below 120 microns in thickness is being strictly enforced across the state.

To carry out regular surprise inspections, district-level special task forces have been constituted, officials said.

"These task forces include members from the district administration, police, urban affairs department, and MSPCB. Surprise checks are being conducted to detect the use of banned plastic items, and



action is being taken accordingly," a senior official of the MSPCB told PTI.

Highlighting the scale of the enforcement drives, he said, "For the state of Meghalaya, more than two metric tonnes of plastic have been seized from different districts. We are also creating awareness on avoiding these plastics and encouraging the use of eco-friendly alternatives like cloth bags".

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 24: India's unique traditional craft beverages, including Goa's feni, Nashik's artisanal wines, and Kerala's toddy, are set to gain recognition in the UK as the two countries signed the free trade agreement Thursday.

With this, ethnic Indian drinks will not only enjoy their traditional Geographical Indication (GI) protection but also gain access to developed markets as the UK, where demand for natural and organic products is on the rise.

They will offer their unique taste, distinct flavour profile and heritage to the British tumbler.

The FTA will not only help place traditional Indian craft beverages on the shelf space



in the UK, along with Scotch Whisky and others, but also help explore niche channels such as hospitality, said a Commerce & Industry ministry official.

"Indian craft drinks like feni from Goa, artisanal wines from Nashik, and toddy from Kerala will now enjoy Geographical Indication (GI) protection and shelf space in high-end UK re-

tail and hospitality chains," the official added.

This will be a major boost for the government, which is promoting exports of Indian alcoholic beverages to global

INDIA-UK TRADE DEAL

of the day note

The elections were postponed again in 2023 when the colleges were temporarily taken over for assembly elections and for the implementation of various components of the new National Education Policy. However, despite being in power from December 2023, the current BJP government has not restored the elections



The vice president holds the second-highest constitutional position in the country. The BJP and the Central government have consistently misused constitutional posts and institutions



After becoming MLA, Vasava started raising the issue of large scale corruption. Funds meant for building schools, roads and hospitals were going into the pockets of some politicians. BJP leaders are afraid of Vasava because he became the voice of tribals. BJP thought tribals will not vote for them if Vasava keeps raising their issues



SHORT TAKES

UP govt suspends two officials for negligence

GORAKHPUR (UP): Two senior officials, including the commandant at the 26th Battalion Provincial Armed Constabulary, have been suspended following protest by women police constable recruits over alleged poor living conditions in their barracks and privacy concerns, an official said.

Minor abducted, raped; 5 booked

SITAPUR (UP): A day after a 12-year-old girl here alleged that she was abducted, raped and an attempt was made to forcefully change her religion, police have booked five people, including her minor friend, police said Thursday. Based on her complaint lodged on Wednesday police have taken one accused, Shah Rukh, into custody. In her complaint, the girl alleged that she was kidnapped by her 15-year-old female friend and her parents, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Durgesh Kumar Singh said.

6 Pak drones neutralised

CHANDIGARH: Three pistols and over one kg of heroin were seized after Border Security Force (BSF) personnel intercepted six Pakistani drones near the International Border in Punjab's Amritsar district, an official said Thursday. BSF troopers neutralised five drones near the Modhe village in Amritsar Wednesday night. They also seized four packets containing three pistols, as many magazines and a packet of heroin weighing 1.070 kg, said the official. Early Thursday, the BSF troops intercepted another drone near Attari village and recovered two magazines.

Mithun counters Mamata's migrant claims

KOLKATA: BJP leader and actor Mithun Chakraborty Thursday hit out at West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, dismissing her recent claims of harassment of Bengali-speaking migrant workers in other states as "baseless" and accusing her of spreading fear for political mileage ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.



I am thankful to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister for promising that statehood will be restored in Jammu and Kashmir. I firmly believe that they will return the statehood. But the sooner it is done, the better it will be

GHULAM NABI AZAD | DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSIVE AZAD PARTY CHAIRPERSON

95.1 PC RURAL HOUSEHOLDS HAVE ACCESS TO TOILETS: GOVT

According to a government survey, about 95.1 per cent of rural households have access to toilets. 92.7 per cent have arrangements to dispose of organic waste and 78.7 per cent have systems in place for greywater disposal, Minister of State for Jal Shakti V Somanna said Thursday



K'TAKA LS POLL 'CHEATING'

Rahul, EC engage in war of words

A spokesperson of the EC wondered as to why such "baseless and threatening allegations are being made against the CEC and that too now"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: Rahul Gandhi and the Election Commission (EC) were engaged in a war of words Thursday over alleged "cheating" in a Karnataka constituency during last year's Lok Sabha polls, with the Congress leader warning the poll authority that it will not get away with this "because we are going to come for you".



not only made "baseless allegations" but also "chosen to threaten" a constitutional body.

The EC spokesperson said as far as the Karnataka electoral rolls of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls are concerned, not a single appeal was filed with any of the district magistrates or the chief electoral officer of the state - a valid legal remedy available to the Congress under section 24 of the RP Act.

As far as the conduct of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls is concerned, of the 10 election petitions, not a single one was filed by any losing Congress candidate as a legal remedy available to the party under section 80 of the RP Act, he pointed out.

Gandhi accused the EC of not functioning as the Election Commission of India and "not doing its job".

Asked about the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav's

reported remarks that the option of boycotting the state Assembly polls, due later in the year, remains open, Gandhi told reporters in the Parliament House complex that the Congress has "concrete, 100 per cent proof" that the EC allowed cheating in a seat in Karnataka.

"Not 90 per cent, when we decide to show it to you, it is a 100 per cent proof," the leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"We just looked at one constituency and we found this. I am absolutely convinced that constituency after constituency, this is the drama that is taking place.... I want to send a message to the Election Commission -- if you think you are going to get away with this, if your officers think they are going to get away with this, you are mistaken. You are not going to get away with this because we are going to come for you," he said.

Apex court: HC bail order perverse use of discretionary powers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: The Supreme Court Thursday called the Karnataka High Court's decision to grant bail to Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and six others in the Renukaswamy murder case a "perverse exercise" of discretionary power.

A bench comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan went on to reserve the verdict on Karnataka government's appeal against the December 13, 2024 order of the high court granting bail to the actor and co-accused.

The top court heard submissions of senior advocates Siddhath Luthra, appearing for the state government, and Siddharth Dave and others, representing the accused in the case.

It took on records the written note filed by the state and a few others while asking the counsel for remaining accused persons to file short notes within a week.

Questioning the grant of the reprieve, Justice Pardiwala asked defence counsel by saying, "Don't you think that the high court has dictated an order of acquittal of seven accused while deciding bail petitions?" The judge went on, "What is worrying is that the manner in which the high court dictated the bail order... does the high court dictate the same kind of order in every bail matter?" The bench further questioned the way the high court dealt with the statements of two eye witnesses, Kiran and Puneet, calling them "unreli-

RENUKASWAMY MURDER



able witnesses".

"This (the grant of bail) is the perverse exercise of discretionary powers in grant of bail to accused," Justice Pardiwala said.

Pointing out all accused persons were out on bail and the trial was yet to start, the court asked, "Has the high court applied its mind judicially?"

The bench July 17 expressed its reservation over the high court granting bail to the accused and said it was "not at all convinced" by the manner in which the discretionary power exercised.

Justice Pardiwala said, "To be very honest with you, we are not convinced with the manner in which the high court has exercised discretion."

The court underlined the need to be convinced that there was "no good reason for this court to interfere".

Luthra argued the bail granted by the high court was unjustified, especially in a case involving serious charges under Section 302 (murder) of the IPC.

He argued the high court effectively granted a "pre-trial acquittal" without properly examining key evidence, including statements of eyewitnesses and forensic findings.

Bring down age of consent from 18 to 16 years, SC told

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: The Supreme Court has been urged by amicus curiae and senior advocate Indira Jaising to read down the statutory age of consent from 18 to 16 years.

Jaising, who is assisting the top court in "Nipun Saxena v. Union of India" case, has filed her written submissions challenging the blanket criminalisation of sexual activity involving adolescents aged 16 to 18 under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012 and Section 375 of IPC.

She has argued the current law criminalises consensual romantic relationships among adolescents and violates their constitutional rights. Jaising said the legal framework wrongly equates consensual relationships between adolescents with abuse, ignoring their autonomy, maturity, and capacity to consent.

"There is no rational reason or empirical data to justify the increase in the age of consent from 16 to 18 years," Jaising submitted, noting that the age had remained at 16 for over 70 years until it was raised by the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. She pointed out the increase came without debate and went against the Justice Verma Committee's recommendation to retain 16 as the age of consent. The amicus curiae submitted adolescents today attain puberty earlier and are capable of forming romantic and sexual relationships of their choice. Scientific and social data, including findings from the National Family Health Survey, indicate sexual activity among teenagers is not uncommon, she said.

Jaising cited a 180 per cent rise in prosecutions under POCSO involving minors aged 16-18 between 2017 and 2021.

"Most complaints are filed by parents, often against the girl's will, in cases involving inter-caste or inter-faith relationships," she said, cautioning criminalising consensual sex "forces young couples into hiding, marriage or legal trouble, instead of encouraging open dialogue and education". To address this, she urged the court to read into the law a "close-in-age" exception, which would exempt consensual sexual acts between adolescents aged 16 to 18 from prosecution under POCSO and IPC.

HP: Eight killed as bus falls 100 feet off road

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mandi (HP), July 24: A state-run bus veered off a steep mountain road and plunged 100 feet in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district, killing eight people, including four women, police said Thursday.

The accident took place at Tarangla near Maseran when the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) bus with 29 people, including the driver and the conductor, on board was on its way to Durgapur in the district from Sarkaghat. Five people were declared dead at the Civil Hospital Sarkaghat, two at the Government Medical College Nerchowk and one in AIIMS Bilaspur, police said.

As many as 17 injured people are under treatment at the Government Medical College Nerchowk, AIIMS Bilaspur and RKGMC Hamirpur while four are taking treatment in the Civil Hospital Sarkaghat, they added.

The accident was noticed by local residents who immediately informed the police. Mandi SP Sakshi Verma said local police and ambulance teams promptly reached the site and carried out a rescue operation, navigating the steep terrain to evacuate victims. The cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained, Verma, who was at the spot, said. Some reports said that an injured woman passenger asked a person who helped her to bring her bag with ₹1.5 lakh cash in it. The helper searched for the bag and handed it over to the injured woman.

INDIA bloc likely to put up joint candidate: Sources



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: The INDIA bloc is likely to contest the vice presidential poll after a collective decision on a common candidate as it feels that the numbers are not overwhelmingly stacked against the Opposition despite the BJP-led NDA having a majority, sources in the grouping said Thursday.

They said that there is a feeling that the Opposition parties should not shy away from a contest to send a strong political message irrespective of the outcome.

In a sudden move, Jagdeep Dhankhar quit as vice presi-

dent Monday evening citing medical reasons, though there have been consistent murmurs about other reasons behind his resignation.

The effective strength of both the Houses together is 782 and the winning candidate will require to win 392 votes in the election for the vice president, considering all eligible voters exercise their franchise. All members of Lok Sabha and

Rajya Sabha, including the nominated ones, vote in the vice presidential poll. In Lok Sabha, while the BJP-led NDA enjoys the support of 293 members in the 542-member House, the INDIA bloc has 234 members.

The ruling alliance has the support of about 130 members in Rajya Sabha that has an effective strength of 240, assuming that the nominated members vote in support of the NDA nominee. The INDIA bloc has the support of 79 members in the Upper House.



Women walk through heavy rainfall in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

Many AI pilots reported sick after AI171 crash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: Air India witnessed a "minor increase" in sick leaves reported by pilots across its fleet in the aftermath of the Ahmedabad plane crash, with 112 pilots reporting sick in a single day June 16, according to the government.

In response to a Lok Sabha member's query on whether Air India has been experiencing mass sick reporting by its flight crew members, following the crash, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol Thursday said there has been a minor increase in sick leaves reported by pilots, and as many as 51 commanders reported sick June 16.

"Air India reported a minor increase in sick leaves reported by pilots across all fleets in the aftermath of the AI-171 accident. On 16.06.2025, a total of 112 pilots reported sick, comprising of 51 Command-



Plane aborted takeoff due to technical snag

New Delhi: A Mumbai-bound Air India Express plane, with around 160 passengers onboard, aborted takeoff due to a technical snag at the Delhi airport Wednesday evening, according to a source. An Air India Express spokesperson said the crew of the airline's one of the flights from Delhi elected to reject takeoff, prioritising safety following a minor technical issue. A source said the pilot decided to abort takeoff as there was a glitch with the screens displaying the speed parameters in the cockpit. The flight was to be operated with an A320 aircraft.

ers (P1) and 61 First Officers (P2)," the minister said in a written reply.

The airline's Boeing 787-8

aircraft, operating the flight AI 171, en route to London Gatwick, crashed into a building soon after takeoff from

The airline's Boeing 787-8 aircraft, operating the flight AI 171, en route to London Gatwick, crashed into a building soon after takeoff from Ahmedabad June 12

In the fatal accident, 260 people died, including 241 passengers who were onboard the plane, and 19 people on the ground. One passenger survived the crash

Ahmedabad June 12. In the fatal accident, 260 people died, including 241 passengers who were onboard the plane, and 19 people on the ground. One passenger survived the crash.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) medical circular, issued in February 2023, had advised airlines to have a separate, standalone and customised training capsule for the flight crew/ATCOs (Air Traffic Controllers) to recognise and manage the

adverse effects of mental health conditions.

"Additionally, on mental health monitoring, the organisations (scheduled and non-scheduled operators, FTOs and AAI) were also advised to have a Peer Support Programme (PSP) in place for their employees. The organisations are required to enable, facilitate and ensure access to this proactive and non-punitive programme that will assist and support flight crew/ATCOs in recognising, coping with and overcoming any problem," Mohol said.

FTOs and AAI refer to Flying Training Organisations and the Airports Authority of India, respectively. In another written reply, Mohol said that at present, there is no specific policy with the civil aviation ministry related to compensation for damages suffered by civilians on the ground due to a plane crash.



Unlike (BJP-ruled) Gujarat, not a single paper got leaked in Punjab. Jobs were given in a transparent manner as no recommendation of any minister or leader was entertained. If you bring a strong government here, no paper will be leaked

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

BANGALORE STAMPEDE VICTIM'S EARRINGS STOLEN

The mother of a 14-year-old girl who died in the June 4 stampede near Chinnaswamy Stadium during the RCB victory celebrations has filed a police complaint, alleging that her daughter's belongings, including a pair of gold earrings, were stolen during the post-mortem



of the day quote

The PM not only thinks about the current generation, but also the next generation. That is why he has launched campaigns like 'Catch The Rain' and 'Mission Amrit Sarovar' for harvesting rainwater so that the next generation do not face any (water) issue

Even a beggar does not take Re 1 in alms, but here we are giving crop insurance for Re 1. Even then, some people try to misuse it

Language is a means of communication, but never of discord. Mother tongue is important. Every Marathi person is proud of the Marathi language. Insistence on Marathi is natural and justified, but we should also respect other Indian languages

ED raids on Anil Ambani companies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 24: The Enforcement Directorate Thursday conducted raids at multiple locations as part of an alleged ₹3,000 crore worth bank loan fraud-linked money laundering case against the companies of Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani, official sources said.



Some more bank loans taken by these companies apart from certain alleged undisclosed foreign assets are under the scanner of the agency.

More than 35 premises in Mumbai belonging to 50 companies and 25 people were searched under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

Some documents and computer peripherals have been recovered, they said

stems from at least two CBI FIRs and reports shared by the National Housing Bank, SEBI, National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) and Bank of Baroda with the ED, they said.

These reports indicate, the sources said, that there was a "well-planned and thought after scheme" to divert or siphon off public money by cheating banks, shareholders, investors and other public institutions.

The Union government had informed the Parliament recently that the State Bank of India has classified RCOM along with Ambani as 'fraud' and was also in the process of lodging a complaint with the CBI.

A bank loan "fraud" of more than ₹1,050 crore between RCOM and Canara Bank is also under the scanner of the ED apart from some "undisclosed" foreign bank accounts and assets, the sources said.

Reliance Mutual fund is also stated to have invested ₹2,850 crore in AT-1 bonds and a "quid pro quo" is suspected here by the agency.

Additional Tier 1 (AT-1) are perpetual bonds issued by banks to increase their capital base and they are riskier than traditional bonds having higher interest rates. An alleged loan fund diversion of about ₹10,000 crore involving Reliance Infrastructure too is under the scanner of the agency.

to pertain to allegations concerning transactions of Reliance Communications Limited (RCOM) or Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) which are over 10 years old," the companies said.

The ED, the sources said, has found that just before the loan was granted, Yes Bank promoters "received" money in their concerns. The federal probe agency is investigating this nexus of "bribe" and the loan.

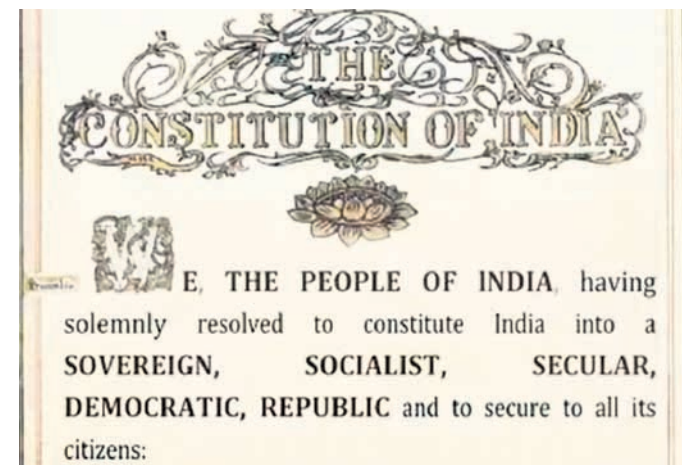
Sources said the ED is also probing allegations of "gross violations" in Yes Bank loan approvals to these companies including charges like back-dated

credit approval memorandums, investments proposed without any due diligence/credit analysis in violation of banks credit policy, the sources said.

The loans are alleged to have been "diverted" to many group companies and "shell" (bogus) companies by the entities involved. The agency is also looking at some instances of loans given to entities with weak financials, lack of proper documentation of loans and due diligence, borrowers having common addresses and common directors in their companies etc., the sources said.

The money laundering case

No plan to remove socialism, secularism from preamble: Govt



In a written reply, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said while there may be discussions or debates in certain public or political circles, "no formal decision or proposal has been announced by the government" regarding amendments to these terms

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to reconsider or remove the words 'socialism' and 'secularism' from the Preamble of the Constitution. Any discussions regarding amendments to the Preamble would require thorough deliberation and broad consensus, but as of now, the government has not initiated any formal process to change these provisions," the minister asserted.

He pointed out that in November 2024, the Supreme Court had also dismissed petitions challenging the 1976 amendment (42nd Constitutional Amendment), which affirmed that Parliament's power to amend the Constitution extends to the Preamble.

The court clarified that "socialism" in the Indian context signifies a welfare state and does not impede private sector growth, while "secularism" is integral to the Constitution's basic structure. Regarding the atmosphere created by the office-bearers of some social organisations, Meghwal said certain groups may be expressing opinions or advocating for reconsideration of these words.

Last month, then vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar had asserted that the words inserted in the Preamble of the Constitution through an amendment during the Emergency era were a "festering wound", lending weight to the call by a top RSS leader for a review of the added terms 'secular' and 'socialist'.

New Delhi, July 24: The Union government has "no current plan or intention" to reconsider or remove the words 'socialism' and 'secularism' from the Preamble of the Constitution inserted during the Emergency period, the Rajya Sabha was informed Thursday.

The House was also told that the government has not "formally" initiated any legal or constitutional process to remove the two words from the Preamble of the Constitution.

In a written reply, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said while there may be discussions or debates in certain public or political circles, "no formal decision or proposal has been announced by the government" regarding amendments to these terms. "The government's official stand is that there is no current plan or intention

Five Bangladeshis held in Meghalaya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, July 24: Five Bangladeshi nationals were apprehended in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district for entering India illegally, the BSF said Thursday.

The illegal immigrants confessed to entering India through the porous hilly terrain of Meghalaya. They crossed a broken border fence and had paid an agent to facilitate their travel to Chennai for work, it said. They possessed forged Aadhaar cards and voter ID cards, and one of them had even stayed in India for nearly a year and spoke multiple Indian languages, it added.

The 172 Battalion of the BSF's Meghalaya Frontier nabbed them, two men, two women and a girl, Wednesday, on the basis of a tip-off.

The group was found hiding in dense undergrowth and promptly detained. "This swift and coordinated action not only prevented a potential security breach but also highlights the alertness and professionalism of BSF personnel in securing the border," a spokesperson of the force said. The illegal immigrants were handed over to the police, he said. In a separate incident, members of the Hynniewtrep Youth Council (HYC) "apprehended" four Bangladesh nationals near Shella in East Khasi Hills district and handed them over to the BSF. In a statement, it said the four persons, including two women, were intercepted at Jatap village when they were travelling in a vehicle, driven by a non-native.



A farmer carries paddy crops in a field during the Monsoon season in Ranchi, Jharkhand

PTI PHOTO

India urges Gaza ceasefire, says pauses 'not enough'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, July 24: Voicing concern over the persisting humanitarian crisis in Gaza, India asserted that a ceasefire must be put in place, emphasising that "intermittent pauses in hostilities" are "not enough" to address the scale of challenges facing the region's people.

"Today's meeting takes place against the backdrop of a persisting humanitarian crisis in Gaza," said India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, addressing an open debate in the UN Security Council Wednesday. "Intermittent pauses in hostilities are not enough to address the scale

of humanitarian challenges confronting the people, who grapple daily with acute shortages of food and fuel, inadequate medical services and lack of access to education," Harish said at the open debate on the 'Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question'.

Underlining that the way ahead is clear, and highlighting India's consistent position in this regard, Harish said the ongoing human suffering must not be allowed to continue. "Humanitarian assistance needs to be facilitated in a safe, sustained and timely manner. There is no substitute to peace. A ceasefire must be put in place. All hostages must be

released. Dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable paths to achieving these objectives. There are no other fixes or solutions," he said.

He also expressed hope that an upcoming UN conference on the Israel-Palestine conflict would pave the way for "concrete steps" towards achieving a two-State solution. Harish told the Council debate, held under Pakistan's presidency of the Security Council for the month of July, that India shares historic and strong ties with its Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Describing the health and education situation in Gaza as "particularly troubling", Harish said the World Health

Organisation estimates that around 95 per cent of all hospitals in Gaza are damaged or destroyed.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that more than 650,000 children have had no schooling for over 20 months, he said.

Harish said that India takes note of the High-Level International Conference on the implementation of a two-State solution scheduled for July 28-30.

"While engaging in a forward-leaning and constructive manner, it is our hope that this conference would pave the way for concrete steps towards achieving a two-State solution," Harish said.

66 Maoists surrender in five Bastar districts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bastar, July 24: A total of 66 Naxalites, including 49 carrying a cumulative reward of ₹2.27 crore, surrendered in five districts of Chhattisgarh's Bastar division Thursday, police officials said.

While 25 cadres surrendered in Bijapur, 15 laid down arms in Dantewada, 13 in Kanker, eight in Narayanpur and five in Sukma, they said, adding 27 were women.

The ultras surrendered before senior police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF) and Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel citing disappointment with the hollow Maoist ideology, atrocities committed by Naxalites on innocent tribals and growing internal differences within the banned outfit, an official said.

"Of the 25 who surrendered in Bijapur, 23 carried a collective bounty of ₹1.15 crore. They include Ramanna Irpa (37), Odisha state committee member and special zonal committee member of Maoists who carried a reward of ₹25 lakh, and his wife Rame Kalmu (30), a platoon party committee member (PPCM) who carried bounty of ₹8 lakh," Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said. Sukku Kalmu (38), Bablu Madvi (30), Kosi Madkam (28) and Reena Vanjam (28), who were active in crucial positions in different formations of Maoists among other surrendered cadres, carried bounty of ₹8 lakh each, Yadav added.

Cancer care: ICMR flags shortfall in radiotherapy use

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: A recent ICMR study has highlighted a substantial shortfall in radiotherapy utilisation across all cancer types and underscored the need for interventions to meet the gap in machines required for equitable cancer care.

Published in the BMC Cancer journal, the study stated that 28.5 per cent of cancer patients receive radiotherapy, which is lower than the estimated optimal rate of 58.4 per cent. Breast, head and neck, lung and cervical cancer account for 60 per cent of India's radiotherapy needs, it said.

Data from the Australian Collaboration for Cancer Outcomes Research and Evaluation



(CCORE) were used by the researchers of ICMR-National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research, Bangalore, for conducting the study.

Epidemiological data on stage, subsite and histology

calculated. These measures have been used to estimate the existing radiotherapy utilisation gap by comparing with the current radiotherapy utilisation from the cancer registry as well as to estimate the optimal radiotherapy machines required for the country.

"This study provides a comprehensive assessment of radiotherapy demand and existing gaps in radiotherapy utilisation and in the number of machines in India based on an epidemiological analysis of the cancer burden from the National Cancer Registry Programme."

Published in the BMC Cancer journal, the study stated that 28.5 per cent of cancer patients receive radiotherapy, which is lower than the estimated optimal rate of 58.4 per cent. Breast, head and neck, lung and cervical cancer account for 60 per cent of India's radiotherapy needs, it said

POST OF THE DAY

Latest govt data shows: 1. Jharkhand govt has proposed inclusion of 36 castes in OBC list 2. Karnataka govt has proposed inclusion of Kudubi community in SC list 3. Tamilnadu govt has proposed inclusion of Valmiki community in ST list

@neha_laldas

SHORT TAKES

13 killed in lightning strikes

Bankura/Bardhaman (WB): At least 13 people were killed in incidents of lightning strikes in West Bengal's Bankura and Purba Bardhaman districts Thursday, officials said. Bankura Superintendent of Police Vaibhav Tiwari said that eight people were killed in lightning strikes in different parts of the district during thunderstorms. He said that while four died in Onda, one each died in Kotulpur, Joypur, Patrasayer and Indas police station areas. In Purba Bardhaman district, five people were killed and four others were injured in lightning strikes, a Disaster Management official said. While two persons died in Madhabdih, one each died in Ausgram, Mangalkot and Raina police station areas of the district, he said.

Bucket 'scam': CBI arrests assistant professor

New Delhi: A bucket for ₹2,500! Sounds excessive? An assistant professor posted in back-of-the-beyond Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh has been arrested by the CBI for allegedly accepting a bribe in the purchase of 30 plastic buckets at inflated prices, officials said Thursday. In a corruption scandal laced with intrigue and excess, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked Pavan Kumar Gaudar, an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture, Pasighat, and Anand Kumar Dwivedi, the proprietor of Matrix Solutions, the local vendor.



Everyone is stating that I will destroy Elon's companies by taking away some, if not all, of the large scale subsidies he receives from the U.S. Government. This is not so! I want Elon, and all businesses within our Country, to THRIVE
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

ZELENSKY APPROVES NEW ANTI-CORRUPTION BILL

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy approved draft legislation Thursday that he said would restore the independence of the country's anti-corruption agencies, reversing course after an outburst of public criticism



of the day quote

Our landmark trade deal with India is a major win for Britain. It will create thousands of British jobs across the UK, unlock new opportunities for businesses and drive growth in every corner of the country, delivering on our Plan for Change
KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

From building defence capability and boosting economic resilience, to standing up for human rights, advancing gender equality, and defending the international rules and institutions that protect us all
PENNY WONG | FOREIGN MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

There is no room for so-called 'good Taliban' in Pakistan's northwestern province even as any military operations as a solution to the growing threat of terrorism
ALI AMIN GANDAPUR | CHIEF MINISTER, KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

SHORT TAKES

Syria, Saudi Arabia sign investment deals

Damascus (Syria): Syria and Saudi Arabia announced 47 investment agreements, valued at over \$6 billion, in Damascus Thursday, marking a significant step in rebuilding Syria's war-battered economy. The agreements signed at the Syrian-Saudi Investment Forum cover a wide range of sectors, including real estate, telecommunications and finance. The planned projects include housing, the reconstruction of war-damaged areas, the development of tourism, medical and entertainment sites, skyscrapers, and three new cement factories. Syrian Minister of Information Hamza al-Mustafa said the deals are expected to create around 50,000 direct and 1,50,000 indirect job opportunities.

B'desh Bank revokes new dress code

Dhaka: Bangladesh's central bank Thursday revoked a new dress code directive, three days after its human resources department created a controversy by asking employees - especially females - to dress in 'modest and professional' attire. The HR department of the Bangladesh Bank had also warned that failing to comply with the order could lead to disciplinary action. "This instruction has been completely revoked," Bangladesh Bank spokesman Arief Hossain Khan told reporters here. According to the official, Bangladesh Bank governor Ahsan H Mansur, currently on a tour abroad, ordered the directive to be withdrawn immediately as the issue came to his knowledge through media reports.

Pakistan: 23 more die in rain incidents

Lahore: Twenty-three more people died in rain-related incidents in Pakistan's Punjab province this week, raising the nationwide death toll to 258 this monsoon so far, a government body said Thursday. "Since the start of monsoon June 25, some 143 people have lost their lives and 488 injured due to rain-related incidents in Punjab," the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said. "Twenty-three people died due to monsoon-related incidents in Punjab this week," it said. The death toll from monsoon-related incidents across Pakistan has risen to 258, with 616 injured, since the start of the season. The fatalities include 89 men, 46 women, and 123 children, the PDMA said.

BORDER CLASH ESCALATES

Thailand F-16 jet bombs Cambodia

REUTERS

Bangkok/Phnom Penh, July 24: A Thai F-16 fighter jet bombed targets in Cambodia, both sides said, as weeks of tension over a border dispute escalated into clashes Thursday that have killed at least 12 people, including 11 civilians.

Of the six F-16 fighter jets that Thailand readied to deploy along the disputed border, one of the aircraft fired into Cambodia and destroyed a military target, the Thai army said. Other countries accused each other of starting the clash early Thursday.

"We have used air power against military targets as planned," Thai army deputy spokesperson Richa Suksumanon told reporters. Thailand also closed its border with Cambodia. Cambodia's defence ministry said the jets dropped two bombs on a road, and that it "strongly condemns the reckless and brutal military aggression of the Kingdom of Thailand against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia".

The skirmishes came after Thailand recalled its ambassador to Cambodia late Wednesday and said it would expel Cambodia's envoy in Bangkok, after a second Thai soldier in the space of a week lost a limb to a landmine that Bangkok alleged had been laid recently in the disputed area.



- Thailand says its F-16 jet destroyed military target
- Cambodia says Thai jets dropped two bombs on a road, condemns 'aggression'
- At least 11 civilians and 1 soldier killed in Thailand, health minister says
- Clash follows downgrade in diplomatic ties over landmine incidents

Thailand's health minister said 11 civilians, including a child, and one soldier were killed in artillery shelling by Cambodian forces while 24 civilians and seven military personnel were wounded. There was no immediate word of casualties in Cambodia.

fortified with sandbags and car tires in the Surin border province.

"How many rounds have been fired? It's countless," an unidentified woman told the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (TPBS) while hiding in the shelter as gunfire and explosions were heard intermittently in the background.

Cambodia's foreign ministry said Thailand's air strikes were "unprovoked" and called on its neighbour to withdraw its forces and "refrain from any further provocative actions that could escalate the situation".

For more than a century, Thailand and Cambodia have contested sovereignty at various undemarcated points along their 817-km (508-mile) land border, which has led to skirmishes over several years and at least a dozen deaths, including during a weeklong exchange of artillery in 2011.

Tensions were reignited in May following the killing of a Cambodian soldier during a brief exchange of gunfire, which escalated into a full-blown diplomatic crisis and now has triggered armed clashes.

This map shows the locations where military clashes have occurred along the disputed border between Thailand and Cambodia.

"The Thai Army condemns Cambodia for using weapons to attack civilians in Thailand. Thailand is ready to protect sovereignty and our people from inhumane action," the country's military said in a statement.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia, the current chair of Southeast Asian bloc ASEAN in which Thailand and Cambodia are also members, urged calm and said he would speak to leaders of both countries to peacefully resolve their dispute. China also expressed concern at the fighting and said it was willing to play a role in promoting de-escalation.

Thai residents including children and the elderly ran to shelters built of concrete and

Hindu temple defaced with racist graffiti in Australia

Melbourne: A Hindu temple and two Asian-run restaurants were defaced with racist graffiti in Melbourne, raising concerns among the community members in Australia, a media report said Thursday. Shree Swaminarayan Temple on Wadhurst Drive, Melbourne's eastern suburb of Boronia, was defaced with red-painted racist slurs Monday morning, the Australia Today web portal reported. Two restaurants located further on Boronia Road were painted with the same slurs on the same day, it added. Victoria Police confirmed the incident, saying that "There is absolutely no place at all in our society for hate-based and racist behaviour", the report said. Shocked with the incident, President of the Hindu Council of Australia, Victoria chapter, Makrand Bhagwat, said it "feels like an attack on our identity, our right to worship and freedom of religion," the web portal reported. Victoria's Premier Jacinta Allan, in a private message to temple management, called the attack "hateful" and "racist", the report said. "What happened this week was hateful, racist and deeply disturbing. It wasn't just vandalism - it was a deliberate act of hate, designed to intimidate, isolate, and spread fear," the report quoted from Jacinta's message. Meanwhile, the Hindu Community urged support from interfaith groups following the incident.

Bangladesh's ex-chief justice detained in sedition, forgery cases

Dhaka: Bangladesh's former chief justice ABM Khairul Haque was detained here Thursday in connection with three criminal cases, including a sedition charge, officials said. Haque, who served as the country's 19th chief justice from 2010 to 2011, was known for presiding over landmark verdicts, including the 2011 ruling that declared Bangladesh's nonpartisan caretaker government system unconstitutional. Detective branch officers picked up the 81-year-old former judge from his residence in Dhanmondi area of the capital, Dhaka Metropolitan Police deputy commissioner Talebur Rahman told reporters. "Haque is accused in three cases. Legal procedures are underway," Rahman said, adding that the former chief justice is likely to be shown arrested in at least one of the cases before being produced in court. The cases against him were filed by different lawyers in August 2024, shortly after the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government was ousted in a violent street movement led by the Students Against Discrimination (SAD) August 5. At the time, Haque was serving as the chairman of the Law Commission, a post he resigned from August 13.

Israel calls India 'key strategic ally'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, July 24: Terming India a 'key strategic ally' and the relationship with it 'resilient through difficult times,' Israel Thursday said it has discussed expanding defence and strategic partnerships centring around R&D collaboration and joint manufacturing initiatives with New Delhi.

A statement from the Israeli Defence Ministry, a day after Director General of Israel's Ministry of Defence, Maj Gen (Res) Amir Baram's first working visit to India, also mentioned the defence-industrial collaboration between the two countries.

Baram's New Delhi visit July 22-23 included high-level meetings with key Indian officials, including National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Defence

Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh. Discussions centred on expanding defence and strategic partnerships, emphasising R&D collaboration and joint manufacturing initiatives, it added.

"India is a key strategic ally of Israel, and our partnership has proven resilient through difficult times. Recent operational achievements and common security challenges create an important window to expand our nations' defence-industrial collaboration," Baram was quoted as saying in the statement.

"Baram shared insights on the strategic landscape in the Gulf region and presented operational successes from Operation Rising Lion, showcasing Israel's advanced technological capabilities," the statement said.



Freed Ukrainian prisoner of war (POW) kisses the hand of his daughter after a swap, in an undisclosed location in Ukraine

REUTERS

US fertility rate reached new low in 2024, CDC data shows

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, July 24: The fertility rate in the US dropped to an all-time low in 2024 with less than 1.6 kids per woman, new federal data released Thursday shows.

The US was once among only a few developed countries with a rate that ensured each generation to replace itself - about 2.1 kids per woman. But it has been sliding in America for close to

two decades as more women are waiting longer to have children or never taking that step at all.

The new statistic is on par with fertility rates in western European countries, according to World Bank data.

Alarmed by recent drops, the Trump administration has taken steps to increase falling birth rates, like issuing an executive order meant to expand access to and reduce costs of in vitro fertilisation and backing the idea of "baby bonuses" that



might encourage more couples to have kids.

But there's no reason to be alarmed, according to Leslie Root, a University of Colorado Boulder researcher focused on fertility and population policy. "We're seeing this as part of

an ongoing process of fertility delay. We know that the US population is still growing, and we still have a natural increase - more births than deaths," she said. The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention released the statistic for the total fertility rate with updated birth data for 2024.

In the early 1960s, the US total fertility rate was around 3.5, but plummeted to 1.7 by 1976 after the Baby Boom ended. It gradually rose to 2.1 in

2007 before falling again, aside from a 2014 uptick. The rate in 2023 was 1.621, and inched down in 2024 to 1.599, according to the CDC's National Centre for Health Statistics.

Birth rates are generally declining for women in most age groups - and that doesn't seem likely to change in the near future, said Karen Guzzo, director of the Carolina Population Centre at the University of North Carolina.

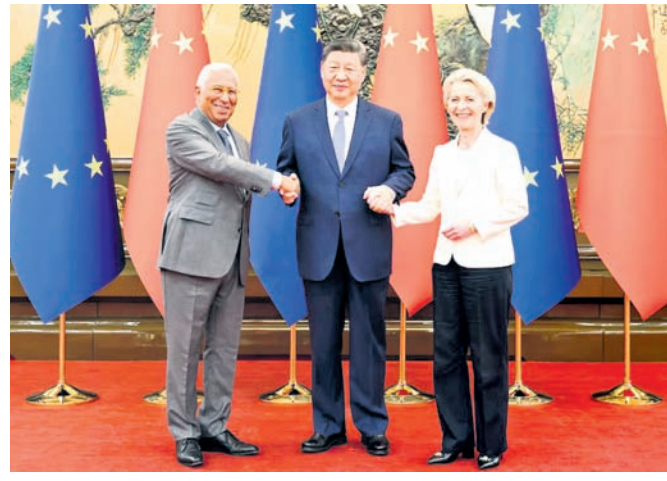
People are marrying later

and also worried about their ability to have the money, health insurance and other resources needed to raise children in a stable environment.

"Worry is not a good moment to have kids," and that's why birth rates in most age groups are not improving, she said.

Asked about birth-promoting measures outlined by the Trump administration, Guzzo said they don't tackle larger needs like parental leave and affordable child care.

EU-China ties at 'inflection point'



REUTERS

Beijing, July 24: EU-China trade ties have hit a "clear inflection point," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Thursday in Beijing, capping a tense summit with top Chinese leaders dominated by concerns on commerce and the Ukraine war.

Expectations were low for the summit in the Chinese capital marking 50 years of diplomatic ties after weeks of escalating tension and wrangling that led to the duration being abruptly halved to a single day at Beijing's request.

"We have very frankly and openly raised our concerns... on the trade, investment and geopolitical issues... We have partially identified solutions," von der Leyen told a press conference after meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. When asked about a potential trade deal with the United States, the EU chief said the bloc's focus has been on achieving a negotiated solution, but all other instruments are on the table until "we have a satisfactory result."

"Our relationship with China is of importance, but it stands on its own merits. It's independent of the actions or issues we have with others," she said.

Xi earlier told von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa that the challenges facing Europe do not come from China, urging the bloc to "properly handle differences and frictions."

"It is hoped that the European side will keep the trade and

Xi warns EU leaders to 'make correct strategic choices'

Von der Leyen says ties at 'inflection point'

European Union, China issue joint climate statement

EU calls on China to pressure Russia to end Ukraine war

Summit halved to a single day amid tension

investment market open and refrain from using restrictive economic and trade tools," Xi said, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

EU trade actions in the past year have targeted Chinese exports of electric vehicles among other goods, and its officials have repeatedly complained about Chinese industrial overcapacity as the bloc's trade deficit with China ballooned to a historic 305.8 billion euros (\$360 billion) last year.

Von der Leyen told the press that the Chinese leadership has started to look into the overcapacity issue, and expressed willingness to support more consumption.

"We think increasing market access for European companies in China, limiting the external impact of involution, and reducing export controls are important steps forward," she told Premier Li earlier, according to a pool report.

She described her meeting with Xi as "excellent".

The two sides also issued a joint statement on climate, reiterating their commitment to new climate action plans across the whole economy.



We import fossil fuels worth ₹22 lakh crore, which is also causing pollution... so diversifying agriculture towards the energy and power sector is the need of the hour
NITIN GADKARI | ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MINISTER

'SEBI VS SCAM' DRIVE LAUNCHED
Markets regulator SEBI Thursday said it has launched a joint investor awareness campaign "SEBI vs SCAM" in collaboration with MII and the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) to tackle financial frauds and protect investors in the securities market. This unified initiative aims to bolster investor protection and combat financial fraud and scams within the securities market



of the day **quote**

The Income Tax department is working to give shape to the rules, forms and procedures for the new Income Tax Bill, 2025, which aims to simplify the six-decade old direct tax law
RAVI AGARWAL | CBOI CHIEF

Rising installed capacity of renewables by India in 2024 helped save roughly ₹4 lakh crore (more than \$46 billion) in fossil fuel and pollution-related costs
PRALHAD JOSHI | UNION MINISTER

Good policies alone are not enough, what matters actually is timely execution... I think all these years you (tax officer) have done your maximum best. Now is the time to raise the benchmark
NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

Q1 RESULTS

REC profit rises
New Delhi: State-owned REC Ltd Thursday posted a 29 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹4,465.71 crore June quarter compared to the year-ago period, mainly on the back of higher revenues. The company had reported a consolidated net profit of ₹3,460.19 crore in the quarter ended on June 30, 2024, a BSE filing stated.

AESL posts profit
New Delhi: Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) Thursday posted a consolidated net profit of ₹538.94 crore for June quarter FY26 mainly due to higher revenues from transmission business. The company had incurred a loss of ₹1,190.66 crore in the year-ago period, a BSE filing said.

MOFSL profit up
New Delhi: Motilal Oswal Financial Services Thursday reported its highest-ever quarterly net profit of ₹1,430 crore for the June quarter, marking a 40 per cent year-on-year jump. Its consolidated net operating revenue rose 24 per cent to ₹1,412 crore in the first quarter of the current fiscal, the company said in a statement.

Indian Bank profit surges
New Delhi: State-owned Indian Bank Thursday posted a 24 per cent rise in net profit to ₹2,973 crore in the first quarter of the current financial year. The Chennai-based lender had earned a net profit of ₹2,403 crore. The total income rose to ₹18,721 crore during the June quarter of 2025-26 from ₹16,945 crore in the same period of FY25, Indian Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Canara Bank profit up
New Delhi: Canara Bank Thursday posted a 22 per cent growth in net profit to ₹4,752 crore during the first quarter of the current financial year. The Bengaluru-based bank had earned a net profit of ₹3,905 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. The total income rose to ₹38,063 crore during the June quarter of fiscal year 2025-26, from ₹34,020 crore in the same quarter of FY25, Canara Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Nestle India profit slips
New Delhi: FMCG major Nestle India Ltd Thursday reported a 13.4 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to ₹646.59 crore for the June 2025 quarter, mainly impacted by high commodity prices. The company had posted a net profit of ₹746.6 crore a year ago, according to a regulatory filing by Nestle India.

India, UK ink historic trade deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, July 24: London, July 24: India and UK signed a landmark free trade agreement Thursday, which, starting next year, will see 99 per cent of Indian exports enter UK duty-free, while reducing tariffs on British products such as cars and whisky.

The deal, which comes days ahead of the US moratorium on higher tariffs coming to an end, aims to double the \$56 billion trade between the world's fifth and sixth largest economies by 2030.

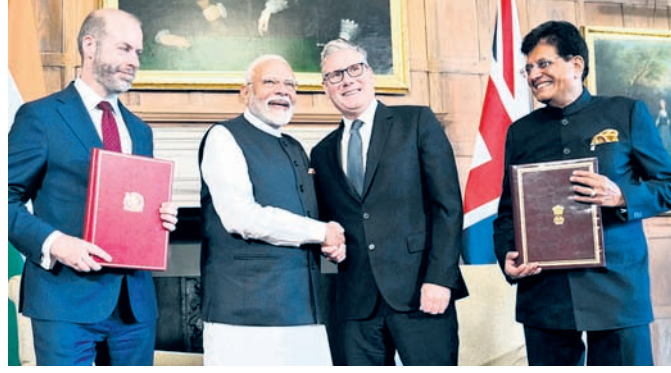
While India has opened its market to various consumer goods, including chocolates, biscuits, and cosmetics, it will gain greater access to export products such as textiles, footwear, gems and jewellery, sports goods, and toys. Also, Indian companies, such as TCS and Infosys, operating in UK won't have to make social security contributions for up to three years for employees who move from India.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and his British counterpart Jonathan Reynolds signed the agreement at a ceremony in UK Prime Minister's country residence Chequers. Under the pact, which has been termed Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), tariffs on Scotch whisky will be reduced from 150 per cent to 75 per cent immediately, and further lowered to 40 per cent by 2035.

On automobiles, India will reduce import duties to 10 per cent over five years, down from the current rate of up to 110 per cent, under a gradually liberalised quota system.

In return, Indian manufacturers will gain access to UK market for electric and hybrid vehicles, also within a quota framework.

India has provided duty concessions to the UK auto exporters only on large petrol and



diesel vehicles and high-priced EVs, while protecting sensitive segments of the domestic automotive industry, especially mid and small cars and low-priced EVs, under the trade pact.

No concessions are given to electric, hybrid, and hydrogen-powered vehicles in the first five years of the agreement.

On the other hand, India will get duty-free access to several agri goods in UK, such as fruits, vegetables, cereals, turmeric, pepper, cardamom, and processed goods like ready-to-eat food, mango pulp, pickles, and pulses.

Over 95 per cent of agricultural and processed food tariff lines will attract zero duty. Marine products such as shrimp, tuna, fishmeal, and feeds, currently taxed between 4.2 per cent and 8.5 per cent at present, will become completely duty-free once the pact comes into force. In the textiles segment, India is facing a duty disadvantage vis-a-vis Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia, which have duty-free access to UK market.

Products that are poised for exponential growth include RMG (ready-made garments), home textiles, carpets, and handicrafts, where the removal of duties would create competitive advantages.

India is expected to gain at least 5 per cent additional market share in UK within 1 to 2 years of the implementation of the deal.

The pact also announced tariff elimination (from 18 per cent at present) for Indian engineering exports to UK. India's exports of generic medicines and medical devices, such as X-ray systems and surgical instruments, will get a major boost with Britain agreeing on zero duty under a free trade agreement.

On the services front, the agreement will enable Indian financial services players to expand their footprint in Britain, enhance their competitiveness and serve the Indian diaspora and businesses.

For digitally delivered financial services, UK has provided market access with respect to the various sub-sectors under both insurance and insurance-related, and banking and other financial services.

With regard to the insurance sector, the agreement is expected to enable non-life insurance services and insurance intermediation (maritime shipping and goods in international transit), reinsurance and retrocession, and services auxiliary to insurance to expand their operation in India.

India has also secured an agreement on the Double Contribution Convention, which will exempt Indian professionals and their employers from social security payments in UK for up to three years, improving the cost competitiveness of Indian talent.

BEYOND BORDERS

SC dismisses KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: SpiceJet Thursday said the Supreme Court has dismissed the appeal filed by KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran seeking damages of over ₹1,300 crore and other claims.

"These assertions were already previously rejected by the Arbitral Tribunal, the Delhi High Court and then the Division Bench of Delhi High Court," it added.

The case dates back to early 2015 when SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh, who had owned the airline earlier, bought it back from Maran after it was grounded for months due to resource crunch.

As part of the agreement, Maran and KAL Airways claimed to have paid SpiceJet ₹679 crore for issuing warrants and preference shares.

However, Maran moved court in 2017, alleging SpiceJet had not issued convertible warrants and preference shares nor returned the money. It has been a long-standing share transfer dispute.

Shares of SpiceJet were trading 1.84 per cent down at ₹39.55 apiece on the BSE.

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SENSEX TANKS 542 POINTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 24: Equity markets fell Thursday, with the benchmark Sensex tumbling 542.47 points, amid profit-taking in blue-chip stocks and foreign fund outflows.

Despite a positive start, the benchmark tanked 542.47 points, or 0.66 per cent, to settle at 82,184.17. During the day, it tumbled 679.42 points, or 0.82 per cent, to 82,047.22.

As many as 2,410 stocks declined, while 1,645 advanced and 166 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 157.80 points, or 0.63 per cent, to 25,062.10.

From the Sensex firms, Trent, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance Industries, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HCL Technologies, and NTPC were among the biggest laggards.

However, Eternal, Tata Motors, Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, and Titan were the gainers. Infosys declined over 1 per



cent amid profit-taking after its June quarter earnings announcement.

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

European markets were quoting in the green. The US markets ended higher Wednesday.

India and UK Thursday inked a landmark free trade agree-

Private sector sees robust growth despite inflation



REUTERS

Bangalore, July 24: Growth in India's private sector remained robust in July, supported by strong manufacturing and international demand, but rising inflation and weaker employment generation tempered the expansion, a business survey showed.

Moderation in overall growth came alongside a drop in business confidence to an over two-year low. Firms expressed concerns over rising price pressures and heightened competition while uncertainty surrounding trade negotiations with US also likely weighed on sentiment.

July's HSBC Flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by S&P Global, registered 60.7, a slight dip from June's final reading of 61.0. The figure remained well above the 50-level that separates growth from contraction and marked sustained expansion for the past four years.

"The strong performance was bolstered by growth in total sales, export orders and output levels. Indian manufacturers led the way, recording faster rates of expansion than services for all of the three aforementioned metrics," noted Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist

at HSBC. Manufacturing was the engine of growth this month with its flash PMI climbing to 59.2, the highest reading in over 17 years, from 58.4. In contrast, the services activity index fell to 59.8 from 60.4, indicating a softer albeit historically sharp rate of expansion.

Overall new orders expanded at the fastest pace in a year, bolstered by robust demand from overseas clients in Asia, Europe, and US. New orders for manufactured goods, in particular, rose to a near five-year high.

Bhandari noted that despite the strong performance, there were signs of caution. "Business confidence fell to its lowest mark since March 2023, while employment growth moderated to its weakest pace in 15 months," she said.

According to recently introduced official government data the unemployment rate remained steady at 5.6 per cent in June but the way this is measured is inaccurate, economists say.

Meanwhile, inflationary pressures intensified with both input costs and output charges rising in July. Firms reported higher prices for materials such as aluminium, cotton, and food-stuffs and passed these higher expenses on to clients.

Gold declines ₹1,400; silver plunges ₹3,000

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: Gold prices dived ₹1,400 to ₹99,620 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to profit-booking by stockists and a subdued trend in the global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹1,01,020 per 10 grams Wednesday. In the national capital, gold of 99.5 per cent purity fell ₹1,200 to ₹99,250 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) Thursday.

As per the association, silver prices plunged ₹3,000 to ₹1,15,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) Thursday. It had rallied ₹4,000 to hit a lifetime high of ₹1,18,000 per kg Wednesday.

Meanwhile, spot gold fell \$24.35, or 0.72 per cent, to \$3,362.88 per ounce in the international markets.

On the global front, spot silver went lower by 0.53 per cent to trade at \$39.05 per ounce.

WOMEN IN BLUE-COLLAR JOBS: GROWTH & ATTRITION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 24: Even as women's overall share in blue-grey collar roles rose to 19 per cent in 2023-24, there is a huge attrition rate, especially with those with less than one year of experience, a report said Thursday.

Despite women's overall share in blue-grey collar roles rising to 19 per cent in FY24 from 16 per cent in FY21, as per Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Annual Report, the cohort faces high early attrition rates that threatens productivity, continuity, and India's ability to achieve its \$30 trillion economy goal by 2047, according to a report, 'State of Women in the Blue-Grey Collar Workforce-2025'.

State of Women in the Blue-Grey Collar Workforce-2025 report by the Udaiti Foundation and Qness Corp is based on a survey with over 10,000 current and 1,500 former women workers across sectors like retail, manufacturing, BFSI, and services.

According to the report, 52 per cent of the respondents with less than one year of experience said they are planning to quit within the next 12 months, compared to just 3 per cent among those who cross the two-year mark, underscoring the need for interventions to arrest attrition at an early stage.

Of the 1,500 women who left jobs in the last 6 months, 67 per cent of them are out of the workforce for multiple reasons, it stated.

"There is tremendous opportunity for India to unlock its full economic potential. We have demonstrated that we can



open doors for women, and the unlock lies in creating systems that enable them to thrive and grow. Women aren't leaving because they lack capability, they are leaving because we haven't yet built the infrastructure and designed workplaces for their

success," the Udaiti Foundation Founding CEO Pooja Goyal said.

With India's blue-grey collar economy projected to comprise 70 per cent of the workforce by 2030, investing in women's retention and advancement isn't

just the right thing to do, it's essential for sustainable growth, she added.

The report further revealed that 54 per cent of women who are currently working are unhappy with pay, and 80 per cent save less than ₹2,000 per month.

Of those earning above ₹20,000 are 21 per cent less likely to drop out in the near term, and among the women employees who are currently out of the workforce, 42 per cent said better pay would motivate them to return to work, indicating that better pay supports retention, it stated.

The report also found that 57 per cent of the women respondents, who are currently working, face transport challenges and 11 per cent feel unsafe while commuting, especially during their night shifts.

Single migrant women in

manufacturing and EMPI sectors rely on hostels (23 per cent) but they face limited safe commuting options, said the report.

One in five women who have left the workforce said they will return to work if the workplace was closer to home, indicating that improving mobility solutions holds significant potential to boost workforce participation, it said.

"It's not just a social imperative, but essential for building a productive, competitive economy. The staffing industry plays a significant role in providing pathways for women to join formal employment. We need to now develop robust, gender-intentional retention strategies that enable the grey and blue collared women workforce to grow," Qness Corp ED and CEO Guruprasad Srinivasan added.

Pant's courageous act

Vice Captain's courage was on full display when he hobbled out to bat on day two of the Manchester Test after suffering a blow to his right foot on the opening day



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Manchester, July 24: Ben Duckett enabled England deliver a potential knock-out punch to India with a sizzling 94 as the hosts punished a wayward pace attack to end on 225 for two at stumps on day two of the fourth Test here Thursday.

Openers Duckett (94 off 100) and Zak Crawley (84 off 113) added 166 off 192 balls to put India on the backfoot after the visitors did well to post 358 in the afternoon session.

Coming out to bat despite a broken foot, Pant's courageous 54 off 75 balls fuelled India past 350 on a pitch with plenty of seam movement. However, the Indian pace trio of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and debutant Anshul Kamboj was not accurate enough to trouble the England openers who returned to their aggressive ways after shifting gears at Lord's.

Far too many freebies were offered on the leg side and England openers, especially Duckett, were happy to oblige. England scored at close to five runs per over while India struck at little over three.

It was turning out to be a forgettable debut for Kamboj, a last-minute addition to India's injury-hit squad, before he had the dangerous Duckett caught behind with a length ball that bounced a

bit more than usual.

In the second session, Pant struck a courageous fifty on a broken foot while England captain Ben Stokes took his first five-wicket haul in eight years to restrict India to 358 all out.

The highlight of the session was Pant making a plucky half-century despite struggling to walk in the middle. Pant sensationally smashed a slower ball from Jofra Archer for a six between mid-wicket and square leg before driving Ben Stokes from the crease for a boundary through cover for a memorable half-century, drawing a standing ovation from a packed stadium. When Archer finally found Pant's stumps with a peach, the significance of Pant's courageous knock was not lost even on the opposition with Joe Root patting the Indian for his valiant effort.

In the morning session, Pant remarkably came out to bat with a fractured foot while Shardul showed plenty of resolve to take India to 321 for six at lunch.

Resuming the day at 264

for four, India did well to cross the 300-run mark in overcast conditions that offered plenty of seam and swing to the England pacers especially Jofra Archer, who was effectively unplayable for majority of his opening spell.

Brief scores:

India 1st innings: 358 all out in 114.1 overs (Sai Sudharsan 61, Yashasvi Jaiswal 58, Rishabh Pant 54, Shardul Thakur 41; Ben Stokes 5/72).

England 1st innings: 225/2 in 46 overs (Ben Duckett 94, Zak Crawley 84).

Legends hail Pant's 'resilience'

India legends hailed Rishabh Pant's heroic fifty at Old Trafford while batting with an injured foot on the second day of the fourth Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar trophy. "Resilience is about playing through pain and rising above it. @RishabhPant17 showed tremendous character by walking back into the game with an injury and delivering a performance like that. His fifty is a powerful reminder of the grit and determination it takes to represent your country. A brave effort, and one that will be remembered for a long time. Well played, Rishabh," Tendulkar posted on X. Former India opener Wasim Jaffer also lauded Pant's bravery and wrote, "Very brave effort from the ultimate team man. Well played @RishabhPant17. India have got a good score considering the conditions." Former Indian wicketkeeper-batter Deep Dasgupta hailed Pant's courageous move, which resembles the moment when former India coach and legendary spinner Anil Kumble walked out to bowl with a broken jaw against the West Indies in 2002. Kumble was hit by Merv Dillon and spat out blood, but batted on for another 20 minutes. Later, with his face bandaged, Kumble sent down 14 consecutive overs and dismissed Brian Lara while bowling with a broken jaw. "I had seen Anil Kumble come out to bowl with a broken jaw in Antigua and didn't think I would see anything like that again. But this Rishabh Pant act of courage is right up there. Just Rishabh being Rishabh," Dasgupta posted on X.

A CHANCE TO BE PART OF

METTLE MEET 2025

OrissaPOST

HERE . NOW

It's time for **METTLE MEET**. An initiative by the state's only home grown English daily, **OrissaPOST** to revive quizzing in Odisha. This year, the Preliminaries will take place August 9 and the Grand Finale August 10. Like in the previous years, top educational institutions of the State both from schools and higher education institutions will be competing for Prizes worth ₹3,50,000 & the Champions Title in both Junior and Senior segments.

QUIZ

Extravaganza

- ### RULES & REGULATIONS
- Everyone will have to mail their answers to 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 XII)
 - No employee or families of **OrissaPOST** team can be part of the competition.

As a reader of **OrissaPOST**, this is a chance for you to be part of the exciting Grand Finale if you can give correct answers in the daily quiz. Starting July 01, 2025 there will be one question each day for you to answer till July 31, 2025. Every day two winners will be selected from correct entries. Then winners will be decided by draw of lots. The winners will be invited for the Grand Finale which will be conducted by a nationally acclaimed quizmaster. So buckle up and get set for some brainstorming.

TODAY'S QUESTION

On this day in 2010, the Afghan War Diary was published consisting of 90,000 documents, most of them classified "secret." Founded in 2006, which non-profit media organization published these documents?

ANSWER TO THURSDAY'S QUESTION

Manoj Kumar

THE TWO LUCKY WINNERS



DR JOSEPH JOHN **FIROJA KUMAR BADHAI**

Others who answered correctly are
Rakesh Badhei, Gobinda Sahoo, Guru Ashis Mohanty, Anjubala Mohanty, Surendra Pradhan, Divyanshu Mohanty, Soumyashree Panda, Abinash Das, Pinky Nayak, Sidhartha Kumar Das, Sudhansu Behera, Ayush Kumar Nayak, Mahesh Prasad Dalabehera, Pravat Nayak

ALL-INDIA AFFAIR

Humpy to meet Divya in Women's WC final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Batumi, July 24: Grandmaster Koneru Humpy held her nerves to score a come-from-behind victory over China's Tingjie Lei in the tiebreaker to set up an all-Indian summit clash against Divya Deshmukh at the FIDE Women's World Cup here Thursday.

Humpy will clash with Divya Deshmukh in the final starting after a day's rest starting Saturday. With Humpy winning, both she and Divya have now qualified for the Women's candidates' tournament next year.

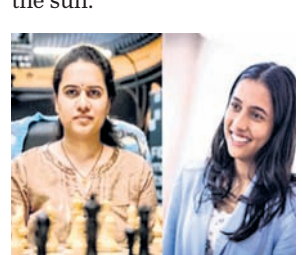
Having drawn the first two games in the normal time control Humpy had to settle up with another 1-1 draw in the tiebreaker that comprised two games with 15 minutes for both players with an increment.

After two draws here, Humpy had to really work hard in the next set of tie-break games that had 10 minutes for both players with another increment. Lei got in the lead early in the set of these two games and Humpy erred in the middle game to lose a pawn and get in to a difficult endgame.

What followed was pretty logical as Lei got in command and even thought the position was closer to a draw Humpy did not find the best defensive resources to equalize.

Humpy lost another pawn on the queen side and despite the presence of opposite coloured Bishops in the endgame, white's influence on both flanks tilted things decisively in her favour.

If there is one title that has eluded Humpy it's the World Cup and world championship. Apart that Humpy has won everything under the sun.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

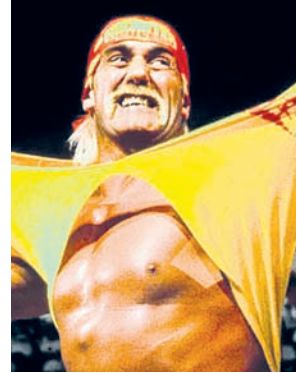
Clearwater (Florida, USA), July 24: Hulk Hogan, the mustachioed, head-scarf-wearing icon in the world of professional wrestling, has died at the age of 71. Florida police and WWE said Thursday.

In Clearwater, Florida, authorities responded to a call Thursday morning about a cardiac arrest. Hogan was pronounced dead at a hospital, police said in a statement on Facebook.

Hogan, whose real name was Terry Bollea, was perhaps the biggest star in WWE's long history. He was the main draw for the first WrestleMania in 1985 and was a fixture for years, facing everyone from Andre The Giant and Randy Savage to The Rock and even company chairman Vince McMahon.

He won at least six WWE championships and was inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2005.

In 2016, a Florida jury awarded Hogan \$115 million in his sex tape lawsuit against Gawker Media and



then added \$25 million in punitive damages. Hogan sued after Gawker in 2012 posted a video of him having sex with his former best friend's wife. He contended the post violated his privacy.

Hogan smiled and wore black throughout the three-week trial.

"Everywhere I show up, people treat me like I'm still the champ," he said of the support from fans.

WWE posted a note on X saying it was saddened to learn about Hogan's death.

One of pop culture's most recognizable figures, Hogan helped WWE achieve global recognition in the 1980s.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Changzhou, July 24: In a defining moment of her fledgling career, young Unnati Hooda stunned two-time Olympic medallist and Indian badminton stalwart PV Sindhu in a gripping three-game contest to storm into the quarterfinals of China Open Super here Thursday.

Facing her decorated compatriot for only the second time, 17-year-old Hooda held her nerves in crunch moments to register a sensational 21-16, 19-21, 21-13 victory in 73 minutes, ensuring her maiden quarter-final appearance at a Super 1000 event.

This is the first time that Sindhu has lost to a fellow Indian in an international event in seven years, the last being the 2018 Commonwealth Games final loss to Saina Nehwal. She had lost to Saina in the 2019 National Championships final as well.

In a match that featured high-octane rallies, momentum shifts, and moments of brilliance from both ends, it was Hooda's fearless approach that made the difference.



From 13-all, Hooda surged ahead with four straight points before sealing the game 21-16, leaving Sindhu on the back foot.

The second game was tighter, with neither player able to pull away. At 19-all, Sindhu executed a clinical cross-court drop that left Hooda stranded, and followed it up with a precise smash to push the contest into a de-

cider at 21-19. The teenager from Rohtak, who has won Super 100 titles at the 2022 Odisha Masters and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters, will next take on Japan's Akane Yamaguchi, the third seed and a two-time world champion.

Satwik-Chirag advance The men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also

CHINA OPEN

I didn't expect that I would win today. But I came with thinking that I will give my all. I am happy that I was able to win today against her. It was a very tough match for me

UNNATI HOODA

displayed tactical discipline and composure to notch up a 21-19 21-19 victory over the eighth-seeded Indonesian combination of Leo Rolly Carnando and Bagas Maulana and progress to the quarterfinals.

The opening game saw the Indonesians leading 14-12, but Satwik-Chirag surged ahead with a five-point streak to take control.

The second game was similarly close. Trailing 10-14 at one point, the Indians clawed back to 18-all and managed to go past their opponents and seal a straight-game win.

It was however the end of the road for HS Pranoy, who bowed out after a hard-fought 21-18 15-21 8-21 loss to sixth seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in a 65-minute men's singles second-round match.

BCCI set to host Asia Cup in UAE, India-Pak match on cards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 24: The high-intensity cricketing rivalry between India and Pakistan will resume briefly in September as decks have been cleared for the BCCI to host the upcoming Asia Cup T20 tournament in the UAE, sources in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) said Thursday.

The decision was taken at an ACC meeting attended by all 25 member nations. BCCI was represented by its vice-president Rajeev Shukla, who attended the meeting to discuss the venue, virtually.

"The BCCI will host the Asia Cup in the UAE. India is likely to play all its matches in Dubai. There are still deliberations on scheduling," an ACC source told PTI.

The tournament is being held in UAE as India and Pakistan have mutually agreed to play all their matches across all multi-nation events till 2027 at neutral venues.

This edition of Asia Cup is being held in T20 format since the next ICC World Cup will be in the shortest format in India and Sri Lanka in February 2026.

IOA puts forth Mission 2036 with aim of bringing Olympics to India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 24: With their sights firmly focused on the 2036 Summer Olympics, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) Thursday said it will be putting into motion Mission 2036, which also aims at transforming India into a sporting powerhouse by the time the Olympic Games come to the country.

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) leadership, spearheaded by President PT Usha announced the launch of Mission 2036 at a press meet here Thursday.

"We are focused on our long-term goal of transforming India into a sporting powerhouse. It's part of the resolve to power through India's sporting aspirations via Mission 2036. We also

aim to bring the Olympics to India in 2036," said Usha here Thursday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had, in October 2023, during the IOC Annual Session in Mumbai, officially expressed India's bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games with Ahmedabad as the venue.

Usha and her colleagues in the IOA executive committee had recently participated in a continuous dialogue with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as part of the bidding process for the 2036 Olympics. India will be fighting it out with

"Our commitment is to global excellence in sport, and we have taken it as our mission to fulfil that dream. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has said,



We are committed to making sports an inclusive space for women, for young athletes, for those from tribal areas, and every Indian who dreams of excelling in sports

PT USHA | PRESIDENT, IOA

youth and sports are the engine of India's future, and empowered athletes reflect an empowered Nation. This

powerful message is the backbone of our mission to realise this dream. We will work together to build up

Ending a lengthy feud, the Indian Olympic Association's Executive Council on Thursday ratified the appointment of CEO Raghuram Iyer and set up a panel to tackle doping after India's poor record was flagged by the IOC during a national delegation's visit to push for the 2036 Olympic bid

a strong and sustainable foundation for sporting excellence," said Usha, the legendary sprinter who still holds the best medal haul by an Indian in individual events in the Asian Games, which she set by winning four gold and one silver in the 1986 edition in Seoul, South Korea.

Usha said as per the Mission 2026 plan, the IOA is also committed to bringing

inclusivity and gender parity in Indian sport.

Meanwhile, IOA joint-secretary Kalyan Choubay said it's the IOA's vision to do whatever is required for athlete development.

"It is the vision of IOA that India should be the best in sports, and we will do whatever is required for athlete development, which comes with good governance, better infrastructure,

and well-educated athletes in terms of anti-doping requirements.

"The vision of IOA is to ensure that India becomes a force in sports, and we will do whatever it takes to achieve that. This will happen with athlete development, it will come with good governance that comes with better infrastructure facilities. It also comes by educating athletes in terms of anti-doping measures, by providing NADA (National Anti-Doping Authority) with more equipment to hold more sessions to ensure more sports conclave, to ensure better coordination from all stakeholders, including the state and central governments, to ensure better coordination with National Sports Federations," said Choubay.