

**Progressive Education for Viksit Odisha**

- Godabaish Mishra Adarsha Prathamik Vidyalay Yojana launched
- More than 45,000 Shishu Vatikas activated for Pre-Primary class children
- Nipuna Odisha program started to boost basic literacy and numerical skills among children

OIPR-15001/13/0710/2526

DADLS - 33

# Govt to roll out ₹3K FASTag annual pass

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** In a bid to ease toll payments on National Highways, the government will bring a Rs 3,000 FASTag-based annual pass from August 15 that would allow up to 200 trips on the highways in one year on a single charge.

The annual pass will be applicable only for non-commercial private vehicles such as cars, jeeps, and vans. It will allow seamless travel across National Highways without the need for repeated recharging of FASTag cards or toll payments, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said, announcing the move through a post on X.

In closed tolling highways such as Delhi-Mumbai Expressway - where toll collection occurs exclusively at exit points - a single trip includes both entry and exit points. On the other hand, on open tolling

routes like Delhi-Chandigarh, each toll plaza crossing would constitute a separate trip.

The pass can be recharged multiple times once the 200-trip limit in a year is crossed.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) clarified that those who already have a FASTag will not need to purchase a new FASTag.

“The annual pass can be activated on your existing FASTag, provided it meets the eligibility criteria (i.e., it is properly affixed on the vehicle’s windshield, linked to a valid Vehicle Registration Number, not blacklisted etc),” it said.

The annual pass will be valid only at National Highway (NH) and National Expressway (NE) fee plazas. At fee plazas on Expressways, State Highways (SH), etc., managed by state governments or local bodies, the FASTag will operate as a regular FASTag, and applicable user fee charges may apply.



**ROWING & WOOING:** Shikara wallas along with locals take part in a ‘Shikara Rally’, organised to promote tourism in the valley which had taken a hit after the Pahalgam terror attack, at Dal Lake in Srinagar, Wednesday

**INDIA, CANADA AGREE TO RESTORE RELATIONS**

**Kananaskis (Canada):** India and Canada have agreed to restore High Commissioners to each other’s capitals at an early date, the first in “calibrated steps” to restore stability to the “very important relationship”, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney had a “very positive and constructive meeting” on the sidelines of the G7 Summit here in Kananaskis. “The meeting discussed the importance of the India-Canada relationship, which is based on shared values, democracy and the rule of law, people-to-people contact and many other commonalities,” Misri said in a video statement.

**P10**



# Modi to Trump: No US role in ceasefire

*On a day when President Trump was set to host Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir for lunch, tensions flared diplomatically as Prime Minister Modi firmly rejected Trump’s repeated claims of mediating peace between India and Pakistan, which did little to budge the US President. In a 35-minute phone call, Modi made it clear to Trump that the ceasefire followed direct military talks initiated by Pakistan, with zero US involvement. He emphasised that India “will never accept mediation,” underlining a national consensus on this stance. However, hours later, Trump, speaking to reporters, reiterated his version, claiming he “stopped a war” and received little credit for it. While New Delhi has been maintaining that India’s fierce counter-attack forced Pakistan to plead for ending the hostilities, Trump has repeated over a dozen times that he “helped settle” the tensions between the two nuclear capable nations.*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kananaskis (Canada), June 18:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has told President Donald Trump that India and Pakistan halted their military actions



last month following direct talks between their militaries without any mediation by the US, calling out the American leader’s narrative that he brokered the ceasefire.

In a nearly 35-minute phone call with Trump Tuesday, Modi firmly stated that India does not and will never accept mediation and that the discussions between Indian and Pakistani militaries on cessation of military actions were initiated at Islamabad’s request, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said.

PM Modi also said that India no longer views terrorism as a proxy war, but as a war itself, and that India’s Operation Sindoor is still ongoing, the foreign secretary said.

The cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan was first announced by President Trump May 10. Since then, the US President has been claiming that he brokered the ceasefire deal by threatening to stop trade with both countries if they do not agree to stop the conflict.

The Prime Minister declined a request by the US President to stop over in the US on his way back from Canada, citing prior commitments.

The May 7-10 military clashes between India and Pakistan figured prominently during the phone conversation that took place as the two leaders could not meet on the sidelines of the G7 summit following the American President’s early

## AFTER CALL WITH MODI, TRUMP REPEATS CLAIM

**New York/Washington:** Hours after holding a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump Wednesday repeated his claim that he stopped a war between India and Pakistan.

In comments to reporters, Trump described Modi as a fantastic man and asserted that the two countries will have a trade deal.

“Well, I stopped the war.... I love Pakistan. I think Modi is a fantastic man. I spoke to him last night. We’re going to make a trade deal with Modi of India. But I stopped the war between Pakistan and India,” Trump said Wednesday.

Trump, who is hosting

Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir for lunch at the White House Wednesday, was asked what he is looking forward to achieving diplomatically from the meeting with the Pakistani general.

This man was extremely influential in stopping it from the Pakistan side, Trump said, referring to Munir.

“Modi, from the India side, and others. They were going at it, and they’re both nuclear countries. I got it stopped. I don’t think I had one story. Did I have one story written... I stopped the war between two major nations, major nuclear nations. I don’t think I had a story written about it,” he said, adding that the people know.

Prime Minister Modi extended an invitation to President Trump to visit India for the next Quad Summit. President Trump accepted the invitation and said that he is looking forward to visiting India, Misri said.

**16 more test cholera +ve in Jajpur district**

**Jajpur:** The cholera (Vibrio cholerae) outbreak in Jajpur district shows no signs of abating, with 16 more patients testing positive for the disease, health officials said Tuesday. Meanwhile, two more persons died of the disease taking the total death toll to 20. Tuja Samad, 25, a woman under ward-25 in Vyasanagar Municipality area, succumbed to the disease at Jajpur Road Hospital Tuesday night, while a one-year-old child identified as Sujanik Murmu from Nahaka under Ward-13 died of suspected cholera Wednesday. The outbreak, which initially affected mostly adults, is now spreading among children and adolescents.

**P5**

**Reds kill 3, kidnap 12 border villagers**

**Malkangiri:** In a brutal act of violence near the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border, suspected Maoists have reportedly killed three villagers and abducted 12 others at Pedakorma village under Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh, adjacent to Malkangiri district in Odisha. Maoists Monday allegedly murdered three villagers — Jhinku Modiyam, Soma Modiyam and Anil Madvi — one of whom was a student. The victims are said to be relatives of a former Maoist, Dinesh Modiyam, who had previously surrendered before the authorities.

# Woman found hanging; kin cry dowry torture, murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, June 18:** The daughter-in-law of the vice-chairperson of Jaleswar Municipality was found hanging under suspicious circumstances Wednesday morning, with the woman’s parents alleging that she had been murdered over dowry and for giving birth to a baby girl.

According to reports, Namita Kamila, 24, the daughter-in-law of Jaleswar Municipality vice-chairperson Pushpapriya Kamila, was found hanging in the bedroom at her in-laws’ residence in Patharpura under Ward No. 4 of Jaleswar Municipality in Balasore district around 10am. She was immediately

rushed to GK Bhattar Hospital, where doctors declared her dead on arrival.

Namita’s in-laws claimed she died by suicide after tying a noose around her neck. However, a complaint was lodged by Sumitra Paul, one of the relatives of the deceased, with Jaleswar police, alleging that she was murdered and the body was hanged to make it appear like a suicide.

Namita, a native of Chudamanipur Chakabishnu, was the daughter of Jaladhar Pradhan. She had married Ritesh Kamila, the son of Pushpapriya, in 2022 following an affair. The marriage was solemnised as per Vedic rituals. Since then, she had been living in a joint family with her hus-

band, in-laws, uncle-in-law, aunt-in-law, and sister-in-law. Ritesh runs a utensils shop at Jaleswar market.

Namita had given birth to a baby girl 10 days ago. Her parents alleged that the birth of the baby girl led to intensified harassment by her in-laws. They further claimed that her in-laws had been torturing her mentally and physically, eventually leading to her murder.

Following the complaint, Jaleswar police detained Namita’s husband and her uncle-in-law for questioning. The body has been sent to GK Bhattar Hospital for a post-mortem.

Police have registered a case (280/25) as per the complaint and began an investigation.

# Iran leader rejects US call to surrender

Any US intervention would cause ‘irreparable damage’, says Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Dubai, June 18:** Iran’s supreme leader Wednesday rejected US calls for surrender in the face of blistering Israeli strikes and warned that any military involvement by the Americans would cause “irreparable damage” to them.

The second public appearance by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei since the Israeli strikes began six days ago came as Israel lifted some restrictions on daily life, suggesting that the missile threat from Iran was easing.

Khamenei’s speech came a day after US President Donald Trump demanded “UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER” in a social media post and warned Khamenei that the US knows where he is but has no plans to kill him, “at least not for now.”



Trump initially distanced himself from Israel’s surprise attack Friday that triggered the conflict, but in recent days has hinted at greater American involvement, saying he wants something “much bigger” than a ceasefire. The US has also sent more military aircraft and warships to the region.

**The Iranian nation is ‘not one to surrender’**

Khamenei dismissed the

“threatening and absurd statements” by Trump.

“Wise individuals who know Iran, its people, and its history never speak to this nation with the language of threats, because the Iranian nation is not one to surrender,” he said in the low-resolution video, his voice echoing. “Americans should know that any military involvement by the US will undoubtedly result in irreparable damage to them.”

Iran followed a similar sequence in releasing Khamenei’s statement before the video was aired, perhaps as a security measure. His location is not known and was impossible to discern from the tight shot that showed only beige curtains, an Iranian flag and a portrait of Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Khamenei’s immediate predecessor who died in 1989.

An Iranian diplomat had earlier Wednesday warned that US intervention would risk “all-out war”.

The US has threatened a massive response to any attack.

**INDIA LAUNCHES OP SINDHU**

**New Delhi:** India Wednesday announced launching “Operation Sindhu” to evacuate Indian nationals from Iran as the conflict between Iran and Israel showed no sign of letting up. India accords highest priority to the safety and security of Indian nationals abroad, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. More than 4,000 Indian nationals are living in Iran and half of them are students. The MEA said the Indian embassy in Tehran has evacuated 110 Indian students from northern Iran, assisting them in safely crossing over into Armenia Tuesday. The students have travelled by road to the Armenian capital, Yerevan, under the supervision of the Indian missions in Iran and Armenia.

**P8**



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

ARIES

Today you will go overboard trying to spruce up your looks. You attempt to imbibe new looks. A very desirable date will raise high expectations in you and will keep you on the edge of your seat. Ganesha advises you to take it easy as real relationships are not measured by outward expressions.

TAURUS

Today, you may experience the juxtaposition of pleasure and pain. Household tasks may weigh you down around afternoon. Later in the day, you will be able to achieve whatever you desire solely on account of your determination and mental strength. Pleasure awaits in the warmth and company of your soul mate, says Ganesha.

GEMINI

For a one-tracked fish, you will do an amazing job in dividing your time between work and family. Despite your preoccupation with work, you will take time off for your family, and even plan out a small outing, leaving them pleasantly surprised. Also, your dreams are about to come true. Now, how many times does that happen in a lifetime?

CANCER

You will spend your day reflecting on your past and thinking what went wrong, predicts Ganesha. But keep in mind that your mistakes won't lead to the end of the world, unless you are a nuclear scientist. So get your act together, and stop brooding over your mistakes.

LEO

The friends we make go a long way in making us who we are, says Ganesha. Over the years, with your natural instinct to be a social charmer, you have built a fine circle of dedicated friends on whom you can bank with confidence under any circumstance. Today might be a day when you get the opportunity to make use of such friendship.

VIRGO

Razor-sharp and aesthetic to the last cell in your body, entertain and enthrall people with your guile, especially at a social do, says Ganesha. But conserve that zest and save the time to pay due attention to matters of supreme importance, warns Ganesha.

LIBRA

Monotonous is the word to describe the way things have been till now, but no more, says Ganesha. It might be a very good idea for you to take a break from things around you and go on a small trip. Invigorate yourself with a small picnic with family and friends. It shall go a long way in boosting your energy and enhancing your awareness and wisdom in the coming future.

SCORPIO

Investing in real estate could yield maximum profits today, says Ganesha. An unusual gain from speculative trade is also on the cards. But you may need to spend time in the waiting room, before a more profitable opportunity comes by. You may just reinvent yourself to a happier self and savour every moment of life, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Your friend base is slated to multiply today. At work, additional responsibilities will be thrust upon you, and you will also be given charge of new resources. Ganesha predicts you taking up the challenge and emerging triumphant in all spheres today.

CAPRICORN

Planning strategic moves will be done with, and all that will remain is execution. But Ganesha says there may be delays in implementing ideas that are crucial to the success of your project, and this may leave you disappointed and dismayed. But the problem will be short-lived and you will have nothing to worry about as you have all it takes to be a winner. So, just sit back and wait for the rewards to come.

AQUARIUS

Ganesha says it's okay to cry on somebody's shoulders. In fact, sharing problems lightens the load, and if nothing else, your friends will think you're as human as them. You will feel much better by evening and will even smile a little, says Ganesha.

PISCES

Needless rigidity only serves to imprison you within outmoded walls of faulty reasoning. Inculcating some flexibility will give you some much-needed wriggle room to manoeuvre things your way for good, says Ganesha.



## TOM CRUISE TO BE FETED WITH HONORARY OSCARS

Hollywood star Tom Cruise along with choreographer-actor Debbie Allen, and production designer Wynn Thomas will be feted with the Honorary Oscars awards. Each year, many names are put forward to be honored with these prestigious awards, reports *variety.com*.

## PAMELA: FILTERS MAKE PEOPLE BORING-LOOKING

Hollywood actress Pamela Anderson wishes people would embrace their natural beauty more. The former *Playboy* Bunny says AI and filters are making people become "boring-looking" and she would much rather people embrace their natural beauty like she has done by freeing herself of make-up.



## Shanaya 'dreaming' with eyes open

**MUMBAI:** Debutante Shanaya Kapoor has expressed her happiness and fulfillment as her dream of acting in films is finally coming true with

previous partnership on the remake of *For-ensic*. June 15, Shanaya shared a glimpse from the first day of workshop for *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan*.

Taking to social media, the debutante shared a behind-the-scenes glimpse from the first day of her workshop, giving a sneak-peek into her journey as she steps into the world of cinema.

IAN S

her maiden film *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan*.

Shanaya took to Instagram, where she shared a picture from the behind-the-scenes of the shoot. In the image, the actress is seen standing behind the camera and looking at the shot she gave for the film.

For the caption, Shanaya, who is the daughter of actor Sanjay Kapoor and Maheep Kapoor, wrote: "dreaming with my eyes open... #11thJuly."

Directed by Santosh Singh, *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan* will see Shanaya paired opposite Vikrant Massey. The upcoming romantic comedy draws inspiration from Russian Bond's beloved short story, *The Eyes Have It*. Backed by Zee Studios and Mini Films, the project is produced by Mansi Bagla and Varun Bagla.

Scheduled for release July 11, the film marks Mini Films' second collaboration with Vikrant Massey, following their



**CHENNAI:** Stating that everything she did felt too banal in the face of 'miseries all around us', actress Nandita Das Wednesday said that however, giving up was not an option and that she was now focussed on finding the right producing partner for her next film and telling a story that she thought needed to be told.

Taking to her Instagram timeline, the actress penned a lengthy post on recent developments and how it was important for one to continue to do their work sincerely.

She said, "I've been away from this space for a while be-

## Nandita seeks right producing partner

cause everything I am doing feels too banal in the face of miseries all around us. The world seems to be getting more and more unhinged. Collective insanity and mindless tragedies leave me questioning everything.

"Unable to sleep, and woke up to this thought that giving up is not an option. We all have something we're meant to do, some way we're meant to play our part. The madness doesn't change that; if anything, it makes it more urgent. Sometimes the most radical act is simply doing your work sincerely."

The actress further said, "For now, my mission is to find the right producing partner for my next film and tell a story that I think needs to be told. One drop at a time...what do you think?"

IAN S



# CHITRANGDA: Focus is shifting

**MUMBAI:** Actress Chitrangda Singh has opened up about two important conversations in the film industry—pay disparity and the evolving opportunities for actresses over 40.

Sharing her perspective, she acknowledged that while the industry has come a long way, change takes time. Speaking about pay parity, the *Housefull 5* actress pointed out that the shift is visible. Singh told this agency, "Gradually, a lot has changed, and it takes a lot of time to change. I feel ac-

## JOBS FOR ACTRESSES OVER 40

tresses like Rani Mukherji, Vidya Balan, Kriti Sanon, and Tabu have really contributed to transforming the kind of characters being written for women. She also noted that pay parity is slowly aligning with the drawing power of actors at the box office, adding,

"Whoever is pulling the audiences to the theatre is being paid proportionately, I suppose."

Speaking about the topic of roles for women above 40, Chitrangda remained optimistic. While she admitted that certain limitations exist because such roles were not written in the past, she highlighted a positive shift. "There is a lot of work being written for mature women. Even Kareena Kapoor, for that matter, is doing some of the most interesting work right now," she shared. According to her, the focus is shifting—not reducing—to offering different kinds of opportunities suited to actors across age groups.

IAN S



# Aamir's stand against OTT trend

**MUMBAI:** In a rare and impassioned appearance on an entertainment channel, Bollywood star Aamir Khan voiced strong concerns over the growing dominance of OTT platforms, warning that the current trend is undermining the theatrical movie experience.

The actor, known for his carefully chosen films and long gaps between releases, minced no words in criticising the shrinking theatrical window—the short period between a film's cinema release and its debut on streaming platforms.

Aamir said during the episode, "Today, we've brought this situation upon ourselves. We tell audiences, 'Come to the theatre and watch the film.' But if they don't, we say, 'No problem, we'll come to your house in eight weeks.' Why would they bother coming to theatres then?"

Calling it a threat to the very foundation of the movie industry, Khan



described the cinema hall as a place of shared emotion and community. "All of us grew up watching films in theatres. There's a magic to it—the dark hall, sitting with 300-400 people, laughing together, crying together. If we didn't like the film, we'd complain about it together. That's the beauty of it—it's a community experience, a collective

experience. But now, we sit and watch alone. What's the point?"

Despite receiving lucrative offers from OTT platforms—some as high as Rs. 60-65 crore—Aamir said he didn't want to betray the theatre ecosystem. "I'm not impractical. I believe this film will work in theatres. But I asked OTT platforms to release it only after six months. They refused."

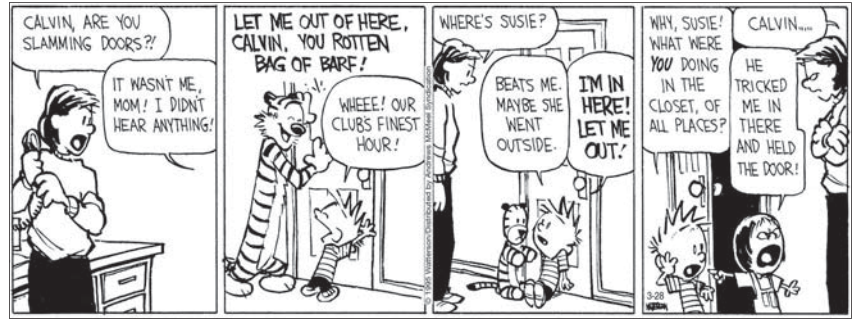
Khan's remarks come at a time when the industry is grappling with changing viewing habits post-pandemic. His firm stand reflects a deep-rooted commitment to preserving the theatrical culture that shaped generations of film lovers.

AGENCIES

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

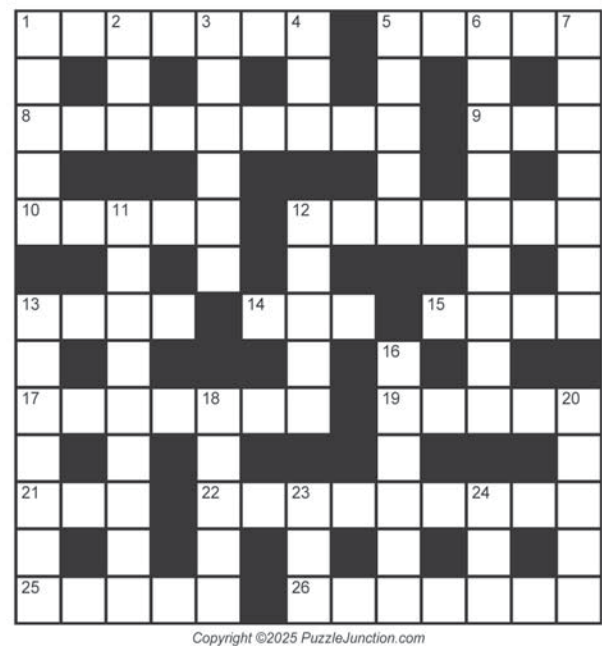


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



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- Across

1 Copy

5 Anniversary buy

8 Yacht necessity

9 Short snooze

10 Button material

12 Skilled conductor

13 Riot spray

14 Furrow

15 Game you can't play left-handed

17 Reindeer herders' locale

19 Dropsy

21 Sense of self

22 Northern Atlantic auk

25 Newspaper section

26 Remittance

Down

1 Pine product

2 Potpie morsel

3 Pressed

4 Toward the stern

5 Jingle

6 What to avoid at the beach

7 Japanese city

11 Loud harsh noise

12 Pitcher's place

13 Big hammers

16 Annually

18 Jibe

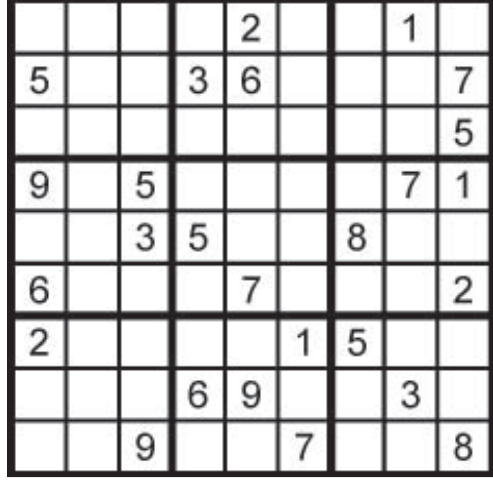
20 Dispense

23 Locomote

24 Hotel amenity

## SUDOKU

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

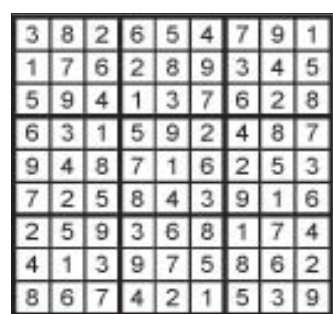


## SOLUTIONS

## CROSSWORD



## SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW







# High-yield crops approved

POST NEWS NETORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 18:** The Odisha State Seed Sub-Committee, chaired by Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment (A&F&E) Principal Secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee, Wednesday approved the release of several new high-yielding and climate-resilient crop varieties.

In the meeting, the committee approved the three non-paddy crop varieties developed by OUAT. Among them, OUAT Kalinga Maize 1 (Khushi) has shown promising performance under Kharif rainfed dry spell conditions and is particularly suitable for maize-dominant districts like Nabarangpur. Two mustard varieties—OUAT Kalinga Mustard 2 (Samrudhhi) and OUAT Kalinga Mustard 3 (Siddhi)—were also released, both recognised for their high yield and oil content.

Additionally, four new paddy varieties from OUAT and seven from CRRI, Cuttack, have been approved for cultivation in the state. Among them, OUAT Kalinga Rice 3 (Sampada) stands out for its suitability for puffed rice and antioxidant properties. OUAT Kalinga Rice 12A (Padmaja) is



a bio-fortified variety ideal for organic farming, while OUAT Kalinga Rice 14 (Shreepada), also bio-fortified and rich in iron and antioxidants, is positioned as a potential replacement for the widely grown Swarna (MTU-7029) variety.

Among the CRRI-developed varieties, CR Dhan 215 (Indumati) is suitable for aerobic and saline conditions, making it ideal for cultivation in coastal districts. CR Dhan 604 (Kalpana) is notable for its tolerance to low temperatures during the seedling stage and terminal heat during the reproductive phase, along with resistance to major pests. CR Dhan 912

## Scheme launched to revive forgotten crops

**Bhubaneswar:** In a major step towards reviving Odisha's rich agricultural legacy and enhancing the livelihoods of tribal and rural farmers, the Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment (A&F&E) department Wednesday launched a transformative scheme titled 'Revival and Sustainable Intensification of Forgotten Food & Neglected Crops in Odisha'. The scheme, inspired by the 'International Symposium on Shree Anna and Forgotten Foods' held in November last year, was inaugurated by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. The symposium had brought together global experts, scholars, and scientists to explore sustainable food systems grounded in traditional knowledge. The scheme, developed under the guidance of Deputy Chief Minister and A&F&E Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, has been formally approved by the state government. The scheme will be implemented over a five-year period from 2025-26 to 2029-30, covering 25 blocks across 15 districts, mainly situated near biodiversity hotspots. It aims to directly benefit around 60,000 farmers by empowering them to cultivate and commercialise traditionally neglected crops.

(Ashutosh Mehek), an aromatic paddy variety, offers resistance to leaf folder and stem borer.

Speaking on the occasion, Padhee highlighted the need

to prioritise climate resilience, shorter crop durations, and nutritional enhancement in the development of future crop varieties.

## CONSERVING CROCODILES

# Experts chart roadmap at seminar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 18:** The State Wildlife Headquarters, in collaboration with the Forest, Environment and Climate Change department, organised a national seminar titled 'Fifty Years of Crocodile Conservation: Learnings and Way Ahead' here Wednesday.

Former Sambalpur University vice-chancellor and Padma Shri awardee, Professor Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi, inaugurated the event, recalling Odisha's pioneering role in India's crocodile conservation movement since the launch of the Crocodile Conservation Project April 1, 1975.

"Within two months of the project's inception, Odisha achieved a breakthrough with the successful hatching of gharials and saltwater crocodiles at Tikarpada and Dangamal," Hejmadi said, emphasising the need for continued research—including behavioural and genetic studies—to ensure the species' long-term survival.

PCCF and HoFF Suresh Pant highlighted Odisha's conservation success, particularly the rise in the saltwater crocodile population in Bhitarkanika—from 96 to 1,880 over the past



five decades. He also pointed to the resurgence of crocodiles in the Satkosia Gorge and the recording of over 200 freshwater crocodiles this year.

Pant also warned of emerging threats such as habitat degradation, dam construction, sand mining, and human-crocodile conflict and said that the department is implementing several measures like victim compensation and safe bathing facilities to mitigate such conflicts.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change deputy director general Artaran Mishra praised Odisha as the only Indian state conserving all three crocodile species—Saltwater (Baula) at Bhitarkanika, Mugger at Ramatirth and Similipal, and Gharial at Tikarpada and Satkosia. He also highlighted Odisha's achievement in producing the country's

first PhD in crocodile research underscoring the state's leadership at the national level.

Former PCCF Saroj Kumar Patnaik recommended a fresh survey to explore new habitats for gharials in the state.

In his welcome address, PC-CF (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden Prem Kumar Jha described the golden jubilee as India's most successful wildlife conservation story. Chief Conservator of Forests and Nandankanan Zoological Park director Manoj V Nair proposed vote of thanks.

The seminar featured four technical sessions, covering 'Saltwater crocodile conservation: Problems and challenges', 'Gharial conservation', 'Ex-situ conservation of crocodilians in Odisha' and 'Conservation of muggers: State perspectives and the way ahead'.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Suresh Kumar Peddina, S/o Late Pedina Ananta Rao, Resident of ward No.-5, At- Dera Sahi, Gudari, P.O./P.S.- Gudari, Dist.- Rayagada, Odisha, PIN- 765026 declare by this affidavit No.- 480, dated- 21.05.2025, that now onwards I shall be known as Suresh Kumar Pedina for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Notarised Reg. No.- 02/16.06.2025 at Odagaon Odaga. I Santosh Bantha address At: Komanda, P.O.-: Godipada, P.S.-:Sarankul, Dist.-: Nayagarh, PIN-752092 , declare that I have corrected my Mother's name from Kuni Dei to Kuni Bantha. Henceforth, I shall be known as Correct name is Kuni Bantha for all purposes. Santosh Bantha

## LOST

I Ohid Saha (61 yrs.), S/o.: Late Khalil Saha, Vill: Dahanasuni (Kajibazar), P.O.: Garadpur, P.S.: Purunabazar, Dist.: Bhadrak declare that I had purchase a land in Mouza: Dahanasuni under Bhadrak Tahasil from Tohit Saha vide Regd. Sale Deed bearing No. 3731 dated 02.11.2017. On dated 25.05.2025 I went to Kacheri Bazaar from my house. Unfortunately the said deed missing somewhere. I tried my best to trace it out, but not found. I swear this affidavit to produce it before the competent authority as the above sale deed has been missed and I have not used it any where.

## PRIDE OF DEOGARH

# Ankita Ganga Deb's work recognised at IIT-Bombay



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 18:** In a remarkable achievement, Ankita Ganga Deb, a daughter of Deogarh, has been felicitated at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-Bombay) for her outstanding work in the field of environmental laws. Her presentation on 'Vedic Culture and Environmental Jurisprudence: A Comparative Analysis' garnered significant attention and appreciation from the academic community.

Ankita's work focuses on the intersection of policy, cultural development, and environmental protection, showcasing her dedication to creating a more sustainable future. Her research highlights the importance of integrating traditional wisdom with modern environmental laws to address pressing ecological issues.

The felicitation ceremony at IIT-Bombay was a testament to Ankita's hard work and commitment to environmental causes. She was presented with a token of appreciation, acknowledging her contributions to the field of environmental laws and policy.

Ankita's achievement has brought pride to her hometown of Deogarh, inspiring others to pursue their passions and make a positive impact on the world. Her work serves as a shining example of the power of dedication and innovation in driving positive change.

# SII launches HPV-cancer awareness drive



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 18:** The Serum Institute of India (SII) launched its nationwide public health campaign—"Conquer HPV & Cancer Conclave 2025" here Wednesday, bringing together top medical experts to raise awareness about Human Papillomavirus (HPV)-related cancers.

India bears a heavy burden of HPV-associated diseases, especially cervical cancer, which ranks as the second most common cancer among women. According to ICO/IARC (2023), India records over 1.23 lakh new cervical cancer cases and 77,000 deaths annually. HPV is

also linked to up to 90 per cent of anal cancers and 63 per cent of penile cancers.

The conclave featured an expert panel, including SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) department of O&G professor and unit head Tushar Kar, AIHPGIC department of Gynaecologic Oncology professor Bhagyalaxmi Nayak, IMS & SUM department of Paediatrics professor Mrutunjay Dash, Kishori Hospital and IVF director and chief fertility consultant Pyarilal Tripathy, and Sambhav: Early Childhood Development Centre founder and director Susrut Das. The session was moderated by SCBMCH and SVPPGIP Paedi-

atrics professor Sunil Kumar Agarwalla. "HPV affects both men and women. Early intervention is critical, especially among adolescents aged 15 to 25," Agarwalla said.

"Through the conclaves across the country, we aim to increase understanding of HPV and its link to cervical and other cancers. We want to empower communities to take preventive action," said SII executive director Parag Deshmukh.

SII's indigenously developed, gender-neutral HPV vaccine 'Cervavac' is now available at affordable rates, marking a major step forward in cancer prevention.

# Cyclists conquer Everest Base Camp

11 cyclists from Bhubaneswar brave rain, rugged Himalayan terrain to reach Everest Base Camp and sing National anthem at 17,598 ft

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 18:** In an extraordinary display of endurance, teamwork, and patriotism, 11 cyclists from the Bhubaneswar Cycling and Adventure Club (BCAC) have successfully completed a challenging trek to Everest Base Camp (EBC) in Nepal recently.

From Bhubaneswar to the Himalayas, the team braved torrential rains, rugged terrain, and high altitudes to reach the base of the world's tallest peak. As the rain poured and the winds howled, these spirited adventurers stood proud at 17,598 ft and sang the National anthem—a moment etched forever in their hearts.

"Despite the downpour, we stood strong at Everest Base Camp and sang 'Jana Gana Mana', our national anthem echoing in the heart of the Himalayas. A moment none of us will



ever forget," said Biswasima Mohanty, the youngest member of the group.

The team was led by BCAC secretary Ajay Kumar Nanda. Other members included Soumya Ranjan Biswal, Raj Kumar Gunawat, Leena Sahu, Ramesh Sahu, Kadambini Parida, Akshay Sahu, Bibhabasu Dash, Biswasima Mohanty, Ajit Panda and Ashok Sethi.

Cyclist Ramesh Sahu, a seasoned adventurer, provided steady inspiration throughout the trek and said, "We came for a journey. We left with a lifetime of memories."

BCAC member Kadambini Parida (48) celebrated tradition by capturing iconic moments at EBC, draped in a Sambalpuri saree, blending culture with conquest. Bibhabasu Dash (67),

the oldest member of the club, proved that age is no barrier to dreams and determination.

The route, which passed through Lukla, Namche Bazaar, Tengboche, Dingboche, Lobuche, and finally EBC, tested the limits of each participant. Just two hours into the trek, the team was caught in relentless rain—a challenge that intensified the already demanding journey. Despite the harsh weather and difficult terrain, the team pressed on, driven by BCAC's commitment to teamwork, strategic planning, and indomitable spirit.

This achievement stands not just as a personal triumph for the 11 members, but as a proud moment for Bhubaneswar and a testament to what determination, unity, and passion can achieve.

# Man held for posting doctored video of CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 18:** The Crime Branch of Odisha Police Wednesday arrested a man for allegedly posting a doctored video of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on a social media platform.

The accused, Kishore Kausalya, a native of Rayagada district, works at a construction company in Tikri, police said.

The arrest was made on the basis of a complaint lodged by a person after he came across the content on social media, the Crime Branch said in a statement.

"The complainant claimed the video was doctored and made viral with the deliberate intention to defame the CM and tarnish his image among the general public," the statement said.

The cyber crime unit has registered an FIR and started investigation into the case.

The video has been removed after the police made a request in this regard, it said.

Further investigation is underway.

MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	86.52 ▲ 0.25	SENSEX	81444.66 ▼ 138.64	GOLD	₹99,504 ▼ ₹37
EURO	99.48 ▼ 0.35	NIFTY	24812.05 ▼ 41.35	SILVER	₹108,556 ▼ ₹439

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	28.7°	27.6°	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain/thundershowers
Min Temp	25.6°	24.2°	
Humidity	87%	90%	
Rainfall	13.2mm	8.4mm	

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



# CID starts probe into Gopalpur gangrape



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Berhampur, June 18:** The CID of Odisha Police Wednesday began an investigation into the alleged gangrape of a Plus III final-year student on the famed Gopalpur beach, an officer said.

The 20-year-old girl was raped allegedly by three of a 10-member gang late Sunday evening on the beach in Ganjam district, sparking outrage.

DGP YB Khurania Tuesday night declared the incident as a “Red Flag” case and handed its investigation to CID Crime Branch. Earlier, personnel of the Gopalpur police station, probing the incident, apprehended the 10 accused including four minors.

A team of CID Crime Branch personnel reached Gopalpur beach and began investigation into the case.

The local police apprised the CID team of the case and informed it that the alleged victim had gone to the beach along with a male companion.

Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek M earlier said that the police have nabbed 10 people of whom four were aged 17 years.

“Three adults raped the girl while seven others helped them by capturing the male companion of the survivor,” he said.

HIGHLIGHTS

THREE ADULTS RAPED THE GIRL WHILE SEVEN OTHERS HELPED THEM BY CAPTURING THE MALE COMPANION OF THE SURVIVOR, SAYS BERHAMPUR SP

POLICE HAVE APPEALED TO THE COURT TO ALLOW THE PROSECUTION TO TREAT THE 17-YEAR-OLD ACCUSED PERSONS AS ADULTS

CONG STAGED PROTEST IN FRONT OF CM'S RESIDENCE; MP PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA EXPRESSED HER CONCERN OVER THE INCIDENT

The six adults including the prime accused were produced at the court of Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC)-Rural Tuesday night and it remanded them to judicial custody.

Additional Public Prosecutor AK Kadam said the four minor accused, also charged under the same offence, were sent to juvenile homes.

“The police have appealed to the court to allow the prosecution to treat the 17-year-old accused persons as adults in view of their involvement in the heinous crime,” Kadam said.

The Juvenile Justice Board will decide on this later, he said.

# Poacher electrocuted by own trap in Ganjam



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, June 18:** A poacher was electrocuted after coming in contact with a live wire laid by him to hunt wild animals at a jungle under Jagannathprasad forest range and North Ghumusar forest division near here in Ganjam district.

The deceased was identified as Surath Pradhan, 45, of Sitarampur under Kudutai panchayat in Jagannathprasad block. According to forest officials, Surath and a few others

had set out for hunting late Tuesday night. He had reportedly laid an electric trap on a paddy field in a forested area. Due to rain, the exposed wire caused Surath's electrocution, leading to his death on the spot.

His two associates fled the scene, said divisional forest officer (DFO) Himanshu Sekhar Mohanty. On being informed, teams from the Forest department, Tata Power, and local police reached the spot and started an investigation. The electric wire was seized from the spot, and the body sent for post-mortem to Bhanjanagar hospital. An unnatural death case (9/25) was registered at Tarasingh police station, and investigation is underway, the investigating officer confirmed.

Forest officials reiterated that laying electric wires for hunting is illegal and dangerous, and that efforts are being made to track down others involved in the activity.

## 6.2-ft long croc rescued from pond

**RAJNAGAR:** A 6.2-ft long male mugger crocodile was rescued from a pond in Dangamal village under Kanika forest range of Rajnagar block and later released into the river inside Bhitarkanika National Park. According to forest officials, the reptile had likely strayed into the pond of one Rajesh Kumar Pati from a nearby canal in Balijora. Acting on the instructions of assistant conservator of forests (ACF) Manas Kumar Das, a team led by forester Babul Kumar Parida carried out the rescue operation. The team included forest staffers Arjun Dalai, Sanjay Dalai, Bhagirathi Singh, Chandramani Behera, and Nirmal Dalai. The crocodile was safely captured and released into its natural habitat in the Bhitarkanika river.

# Tourist drowns, another missing at Mandarmani

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhograi, June 18:** Three tourists swept away by strong currents while taking bath at Mandarmani beach near Digba here. While one of them died, another was rescued but the third person is missing till the last report came in.

The incident occurred despite repeated warnings by the administration to avoid entering the sea due to turbulent conditions caused by a low-pressure area over the southwest Bay of

Bengal. The system is moving northwest, activating monsoon currents along Odisha-West Bengal coastline and triggering moderate to heavy rainfall in the region since Tuesday.

The three friends, all from Barasat in West Bengal, were reportedly bathing in the sea when strong waves dragged them in. Local volunteers found two of them using a speedboat and rushed them to a nearby hospital. A 22-year-old was declared dead on arrival, while a

21-year-old remains stable. The third, aged 19, is still missing.

This is not the first such tragedy in the area. On July 16 last year, five Bengali tourists were swept away at the same location - four were rescued, and one died. In another recent incident near Udaypur beach, two Bengali tourists and one Odia woman drowned. Locals expressed concern that no official complaint was lodged at Talsari Marine Police Station regarding the incident.



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, June 18:** At a time when the gangrape of a college girl on Gopalpur beach has triggered massive outrage, another such incident has come to the fore wherein a married woman was allegedly raped by a gang of four under Baripada Sadar police station in Mayurbhanj

# Jumbo tramples woman to death, injures man

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Morada, June 18:** A 71-year-old woman died while another person sustained critical injuries in separate incidents of elephant attack under Rasagovindpur forest range near here in Mayurbhanj district Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Nangi Hansdah, 71, of Dakashola under Nalagaja gram panchayat (GP) and the critically injured Bada Murmu of Sukhlakholi under the same GP.

The incident occurred when a herd of 25 elephants strayed into the GP and unleashed a reign of terror by destroying the stored crops and properties

of the villagers.

Two elephants among the herd moved away and attacked Murmu who was asleep on the verandah of his house. Villagers rescued Murmu and admitted him to Rasagovindpur CHC, but he was later shifted to PRM Medical College and Hospital as

his condition worsened.

The two elephants later strayed into Dakashola and pulled down the house of Nangi, the elderly woman. The jumbos dragged her out of the house and trampled her. On being informed, forest personnel rescued Nangi and admitted her to Rasagovindpur CHC where doctors pronounced her dead.

Forest officials assured the kin of the deceased woman to pay 10 per cent of the financial assistance of ₹10 lakh for the time being, and the remaining amount after completion of formalities. The critically injured man will also receive financial assistance later after completion of paper works.



POST NEWS NETWORK

husband. As the survivor was complaining of severe pain, her husband took her to PRM Medical College and Hospital at Baripada.

Following this, a written complaint was submitted at the police station.

However, the police hands are empty as none of the accused could be arrested when the last report came in.

Sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Prabhat Mallik said detailed information about the case could not be collected as department officials are pre-occupied with the Chief Minister's visit. However, he confirmed that the investigation is ongoing.

**Jajpur, June 18:** Cholera (Vibrio cholerae) outbreak in Jajpur district shows no signs of abating, with 16 more patients testing positive for the disease, health officials said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, two more persons died of the diarrhoea taking the total death toll to

20. A woman Tuja Samad, 25, under ward-25 in Vyasanager Municipality area succumbed to the disease at Jajpur Road Hospital Tuesday night. She was afflicted with the disease four days back and admitted to the Jajpur Road Hospital.

Later, a one-year-old child identified as Sujanik Murmu from Nahaka under Ward no-13 in Vyasanager Municipali-



**FOR A CAUSE:** Students, volunteers and line department personnel participate in an awareness rally on child labour organised by Bargarh district administration and district Labour department at the headquarters town Wednesday

OP PHOTO

# Cholera: 16 more test positive in Jajpur



POST NEWS NETWORK

ty died of diarrhoea Tuesday. The outbreak, which initially affected mostly adults, is now spreading among children and adolescents.

A central team monitoring the situation confirmed that 16 out of 49 fresh stool samples tested positive for cholera, an infection rate of about 33 percent.

With these new cases, the total number of confirmed cholera patients in the district has risen to 27. Earlier, 11 people had tested positive for the disease.

Though the number of new and hospitalized patients is not surging dramatically, the sustained fatalities have become a growing concern for the Health Department. Officials and observers admitted that the department's response to the outbreak has not been adequate so far.

The Central Team has indirectly acknowledged that the spread of cholera is linked to consumption of contaminated water and food. As of Tuesday, 174 patients were undergoing treatment in various hospitals

across the district. On the other hand, 104 new patients were admitted, of whom nine in critical condition were referred to other facilities Wednesday.

Meanwhile, 117 patients have recovered and returned home after their discharge from hospitals. Observers have pointed out that timely public awareness and closer scrutiny of water and food quality could have prevented this crisis. District Collector P Anvesha Reddy is now overseeing an aggressive response to control the spread, officials said.

## Woman kills hubby over family feud

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dharakote, June 18:** A woman allegedly strangled her husband to death over a heated exchange of words between them at Mundamarai village under this police limits in Ganjam district Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Amar Naik, 40, and the accused Anjana Naik. A team from Dharakote police station rushed to the spot after the deceased's elder brother Tuna Naik lodged a complaint Wednesday morning.

The police have detained Anjana and are interrogating her.

“A case has been registered and an investigation started with the help of a scientific team,” Dharakote IIC Chandrika Swain said. A post-mortem was conducted at MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Berhampur before the body was handed over to the family members of Amar. “The actual reason behind the death could be ascertained only after we get the reports of the autopsy and scientific investigation,” the IIC said.

Sources said the couple was not on good terms and always used to fight with each other over domestic issues. Anjana used to hurl abuses at Amar whenever he comes home drunk.

The incident occurred when the couple fought with each other over some issue Tuesday night. Sources said the heated brawl might have infuriated Anjana as she strangled her husband to death. After murdering her husband, Anjana raised an alarm and tried to give it a shape of suicide, they added.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-AUCTION OF PARKING STAND

Auction Catalogue No.: SDCM-KUR-PKNG

Station & Location : Kaluparaghat-2  
Wheeler (Near OH water tank at Platform-1 side).

Auction Start Date & Time : 01.07.2025 at 1100 hrs., Auction End Date & Time : 01.07.2025 at 1130 hrs.

Note: Prospective bidders are advised to visit the [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and check the upcoming e-auctions leasing tab to get all required information regarding this e-auction.

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PR-247/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 23/ET/ISBP/ENGG/2025-26, Dated : 10.06.2025

(1) e-Tender No. 12-eT-DENE-SBP-25

NAME OF WORK : EXECUTION OF (1) TFR(P)-15.506 TKM IN JHARSUGUDA ROAD-SAMBALPUR-KEREJANGA (UP & DN), (2) CTR(P)-0.805 TKM IN SAMBALPUR CITY-SARLA (SL) SECTION UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / EAST IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 3,86,09,295.10, Bid Security: ₹ 3,43,100/-

(2) e-Tender No. 13-eT-DENE-SBP-25

NAME OF WORK : EXECUTION OF TFR- 107.566 TKM, TFR (TURNOUT)-300 SETS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER (EAST) IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 1,32,48,007.97, Bid Security: ₹ 2,16,300/-

(3) e-Tender No. 27-eT-DENE-SBP-25

NAME OF WORK : BALANCE WORK IN CONNECTION WITH PROVISION OF LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY IN LIEU OF LEVEL CROSSING NO. ST-14 AT KM. 14/6-7 BETWEEN SAMBALPUR CITY- MANESWAR STATIONS IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 63,13,554.43, Bid Security: ₹ 1,26,300/-

(4) e-Tender No. 28-eT-DENE-SBP-25

NAME OF WORK : EXECUTION OF (1) TRR(P)-16.960 TKM, (2) TRR(S)-3.010 TKM, (3) TSR(S)-0.750 TKM, (4) TBR-13.500 KM, (5) SLEEPERS RENEWAL AT LEVEL CROSSINGS- 42 LEVEL CROSSINGS, (6) TFR (TURNOUT)-140 SETS, (7) TTR (CMSC)- 48 & (8) TTR (CS)-5 SETS, TTR (TS)-10 SETS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER (EAST) OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 4,84,22,417.26, Bid Security: ₹ 3,92,200/-

(5) e-Tender No. 29-eT-DENE-SBP-25

NAME OF WORK : EXECUTION OF SIDE DRAIN WORK - 11120 MTR AT CHARMAL, RAIKAKHOL, BAMUR, SARAGIPALI, HANDAPA, BOINDA AND JARAPADA STATION YARD UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / RAIKAKHOL OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 7,84,19,175.50, Bid Security: ₹ 5,42,100/-

(6) e-Tender No. 30-eT-DENE-SBP-25

NAME OF WORK : EXECUTION OF SIDE DRAIN WORK - 3510 MTR AT JHARSUGUDA ROAD, LAPANGA AND SAMBALPUR CITY STATION YARDS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / SAMBALPUR OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 2,17,17,218.37, Bid Security: ₹ 2,58,600/-

Completion Period for the Work : 12 (Twelve) Months (for Sl. No. 1, 2, 4 & 6), 06 (Six) Months (for Sl. No. 3) and 18 (Eighteen) Months (for Sl. No. 5).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs on 07.07.2025 (for all the Tenders).

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)


Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg./PR-253/Q/25-26 Sambalpur

PANCHAYAT RAJ & DRINKING WATER DEPARTMENT					No.i-
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA					
OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, JHARIGAM					
INVITATION FOR BIDS					
No.-BDO/JHG/02/2025-26 DATED: 11.06.2025					
The Block Development Officer, JHARIGAM on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bid through e-procurement in single cover system according to norm of e-procurement system in online mode.					
1. Name of works	As mentioned in Table "A" which includes construction of additional class room of different Primary and Upper Primary School of Jharigam Block.				
2. No. of works	5 (Five) Nos. (Detailed in Tender Call Notice available in the website).				
3. Estimated cost	As mentioned in Table "A".				
4. Tender paper cost	Rs.6000/- per each work.				
5. Class of contractor	D & C Class.				
6. Period of completion	180 days.				
7. Critical dates	* Further details can be seen in the bidding documents, which is available in the e-procurement portal <a href="http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in">www.tendersodisha.gov.in</a> . * Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appear in the website.				
* Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.					
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last date of seeking tender clarification	Date of opening of bid
BDO, JHARIGAM	BDO/JHG/2/2025-26	From	To	03.07.2025 upto 4.00 P.M.	04.07.2025 at 11.00 A.M.
		17.06.2025 at 10.00 A.M.	03.07.2025 at 04.00 P.M.		
OIPR-19408/11/0011/2526					Sd./- Block Development Officer, Jharigam



In order to see, you have to stop being in the middle of the picture.



SRI AUROBINDO

## Nuclear Fool’s Gold

Will US President Donald Trump’s vision of building an im-pregnable missile-defense system be the final nail in the coffin for strategic nuclear arms control? Given that his proposed “Golden Dome” could trigger an expensive and destabilizing strategic arms race, Trump’s dream could be the world’s nightmare.

At a minimum, Trump’s proposed system would represent a dan-gerous paradigm change. Through the final decades of the Cold War, and for another decade thereafter, dramatic reductions in nuclear arsenals led to strategic stability. Throughout this period of progress on arms control, peace was maintained through deterrence, which itself rested on the shared recognition of mutual assured destruction. This concept (appropriately abbreviated as MAD) was explicitly cod-ified in the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, according to which the United States and the Soviet Union agreed not to build any defensive shields against strategic nuclear strikes.

Despite the seeming recklessness of the concept, the persistent risk of a nuclear attack is widely seen to have prevented a nuclear exchange during the Cold War. MAD had made a direct conflict too dangerous to countenance. Neither side had any interest in allow-ing for a war that would guarantee its own destruction. Instead, the Cold War was waged on the margins, often through proxies. And though there were exceptionally dangerous moments – like the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, when both the US and Soviet Union went on nuclear high alert – no direct violent con-frontation ever took place.

Occasionally, political leaders would dream of alternative arrangements. US President Ronald Reagan, for example, envisioned a world without nuclear weapons, and launched the ambitious Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”) to create a space-based missile-defense system. But the idea proved prohibitively expensive, and it probably never would have worked in practice.

Then, in 2002, US President George W. Bush abandoned the agreement to limit strategic defenses, allowing for the system that America has in place today. But these defenses are quite limited, mostly unpro-ven, and oriented largely toward intercepting a couple of North Korean missiles. Should Russia ever decide to launch nuclear-armed warheads en masse, current US defenses would be easily overwhelmed.

Nonetheless, Bush’s decision led Russian President Vladimir Putin to pour resources into developing weapons that could bypass future US defenses. These include a nuclear torpedo with near global range, which could certainly evade conventional missile defenses, and a nuclear-powered cruise missile with unlimited range, which could perhaps sneak in from Mexican airspace. Despite decades of work, neither of these weapons systems is close to being operational. But all that remains from the previ-ous decades of arms-control efforts is the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which Russia suspended in 2023 and which is set to expire in February next year if nothing happens.

This is the context in which Trump has proposed his Golden Dome. While his boisterous talk of “forever ending the missile threat to the American homeland” bears no relation to reality, his administration is sure to allocate hundreds of billions of dollars to develop systems of increasing sophistication but questionable effectiveness. Worse, Russia and China will see these initiatives as threats to their own strategic nuclear arsenals’ viability. If they conclude that they are vulnerable and the US is not, the nuclear calculus will change.

This is especially true for Russia, whose strategic nuclear strength is central to its claim to still be a superpower. The risk of negating Russia’s nuclear-strike capability could instill near-existential fear in the hearts of Russian strategic planners. And the view from China would be similar, though the fear would be less acute, since Chinese power has a much broader base.

If the US spends tens of billions on missile defense, Russia will have to spend whatever it can on trying to neutralize those new capabil-ities. Whether Russia can afford such an effort is far from certain. Obviously, it would have to abandon other priorities. Its faltering space program exposes the financial difficulties it is already facing. Still, such changes would not necessarily be conducive to global sta-bility. While the old strategic arms control regime made clear where everyone stood, the situation would now be more fluid and uncertain.

The bilateral strategic relationship between the US and Russia was difficult enough to manage. A trilateral one that also included China – with its growing nuclear arsenal – would be far more complicated, and one that also involved France and Britain would be downright messy. And the messier the arrangement, the more likely it is that misunderstandings or marginal conflicts will escalate into something more dangerous.

For their part, Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping both de-scribe the Golden Dome proposal as “a complete and ultimate rejec-tion of the recognition of the inseparable interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms.” They are not wrong. But nor do they offer any ideas about how to manage the risks better.

With Russian and Chinese fears growing, the Golden Dome, iron-ically, is unlikely to ensure US security. We have just seen that not even hyper-sophisticated Israeli and US systems together can prevent numerous Iranian missiles from hitting central Tel Aviv. And with nuclear warheads, it only takes one missile.

There are no simple solutions. Although the dream of creating an im-pregnable defensive system will never die, the logic of nuclear stability is straightforward. Even in these difficult times, at least some form of dialogue between the relevant powers is a must.



Carl Bildt

SHOULD RUSSIA  
EVER DECIDE  
TO LAUNCH  
NUCLEAR-  
ARMED  
WARHEADS  
EN MASSE,  
CURRENT US  
DEFENSES  
WOULD  
BE EASILY  
OVERWHELMED



Avinash Kumar & Arijit Dash

IN THE NEXT  
TWO DECADES,  
OVER 400  
MILLION  
PEOPLE ARE  
EXPECTED  
TO MOVE  
INTO CITIES,  
PUSHING THE  
TOTAL URBAN  
POPULATION  
BEYOND 900  
MILLION BY  
2050

### SPECTRUM BANKING

## Growing menace of willful defaulters



Gopabandhu Mohapatra

DURING THE  
PAST FIVE  
FINANCIAL YEARS,  
SCHEDULED  
COMMERCIAL  
BANKS WROTE  
OFF BAD DEBTS  
WORTH ₹10.09  
LAKH CRORE

The writer is a former prime minister and foreign minister of Sweden.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

### WISDOM CORNER

If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Take care of all your memories. For you cannot relive them.

BOB DYLAN

The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.

HELEN KELLER

### FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

# INDIA’S URBAN FUTURE



There is now an urgent imperative to plan and develop new greenfield cities that can relieve the growing pressure on existing metropolitan regions

and Srirangam reflected a concentric model of urban growth around a central sacred complex. These towns featured clearly demarcated residential, commercial, and civic zones. Their layout encouraged walkability, civic interaction, water harvesting through temple tanks, and vibrant neighbourhoods that remain socially and functionally relevant even today. These historical models were not mere expressions of grandeur or religious symbolism. They were pragmatic, ecologically sensitive, and inclusive—balancing density with access to shared resources.

India’s cities today are dynamic hubs of aspiration and enterprise. However, they also face significant challenges. Rapid urbanisation has strained infrastructure, housing, and public services. Informal settlements have expanded, often without secure land rights or reliable access to water, sanitation, and waste systems.

Affordable housing remains elusive for many low-income and migrant families. In cities like Mumbai and Delhi, the cost and availability of well-located housing force millions into overcrowded areas. Rivers once central to city life—like the Yamuna—have become polluted and neglected. Yet these pressures also offer a critical opportunity to re-

imagine the future. India can build cities that are inclusive, resilient, and environmentally responsible—if it draws from both tradition and innovation.

At this critical juncture, India’s dynamic history of urban planning offers not nostalgia to brood upon but essential wisdom to advance upon. India’s past reveals that city-building was once closely intertwined to environmental realities, adhering to local needs and premised upon de-centralised governance and principled inclusivity. To address today’s water scarcity, planners can take cues from Dholavira—through decen-tralised harvesting, revival of tanks and stepwells, and mandatory rainwater collec-tion in new developments. The Arthashastra’s stress on regulated road widths, drain-age, and fire safety can inform updated town planning codes suited to present-day contexts.

The concentric planning of temple towns provides a blue-print for building walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods with shared public spaces at their heart. Such forms reduce commuting distances, foster interaction, and encourage stew-ardship of common spaces.

The importance of prop-erty rights in formalisation of slum lands and furthering sus-tainable urban development shouldn’t be underestimated.

while 1,438 willful defaulters owe less than ₹50 crore to banks. The CBI has apprised that 38 persons involved in cases registered by the agency related to fi-nancial irregularities with banks, fled the country during 1 January, 2015 to 31 December, 2019.

The Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 also provides for the attachment and confiscation of their prop-erty and disentitles them from defending civil claims. Since 2018, six PSBs have issued 1,071 Look-out Circulars in order to prevent willful defaulters from absconding to other countries.

The Enforcement Direc-torate (ED) has filed FEOA applications against 19 peo-ple till now. Of them, several high-profile defaulting bor-rows have fled India in the last decade. Some of them have been declared as fugitive eco-nomic offenders by courts and the process of extradition is ongoing. Some important high profile defaulters like Vijay Mallaya, who defaulted ₹6,900 crore, lives in the United King-dom and is not yet extradited. Mehul Choksi, who defaulted ₹7,993.46 crore, has been arrest-

ed in Belgium and is under the process of extradited. Jatin Mehta defaulted ₹6,800 crore and lives at St Kitts & Nevis and is not yet extradited.

Nirav Modi defaulted ₹6,498 crore and lives in the United Kingdom and a “confidential impediment” continues to de-lay his extradition to India. Nitin and Chetan Sandesara defaulted ₹5,383 crore, live in Nigeria and are not yet extra-dited. Umesh Parekh, Kamlesh Parekh and Nilesh Parekh de-faulted ₹2,672 crore and live in Dubai/ Kenya and are not yet extradited. Lalit Modi defaulted ₹1,700 crore and lives in the UK; his extradition is in progress.

The already extradited de-faulters are Vinay Mittal, who defaulted ₹43.19 crore and lived in Indonesia, and Sunny Kalra, who defaulted ₹10 crore and lived in Oman.

As on date, assets amounting to ₹15,113.02 crore have been confiscated under the Preven-tion of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and restituted to public sector banks (in FEOA cases). Assets amounting to ₹873.75 Crore have also been confiscat-ed under the FEOA in respect

Economists have long argued that secure property and land rights give people the confi-dence to invest in their homes and surroundings. When indi-viduals are assured that they won’t be evicted or lose their land to private or government claims, they are more likely to improve their dwellings, access credit, and contribute to better infrastructure.

Therefore, to gradually ar-rest hasty expansion of slums and upgrade existing slum dwellings, India must invest in well-serviced, affordable housing across income groups. This requires robust land-pool-ing mechanisms and support-ive rental frameworks. Re-viving the concept of planned townships—tailored to local economic and ecological con-texts—can divert migratory pressure from saturated cities.

India’s urban future will be shaped by the decisions we make today. We must re-discover and reinterpret the wisdom embedded in our own past—when cities were designed not merely as settle-ments, but as resilient, inclu-sive, and balanced ecosystems.

There is now an urgent im-perative to plan and develop new greenfield cities that can relieve the growing pressure on existing metropolitan re-gions. Equally important is the strategic decentralisation of economic activity. Many industries and services that are not geographically bound can and should be encouraged to anchor themselves in these emerging urban centres, foster-ing balanced regional growth.

Through a holistic approach to urban planning and devel-opment, we can build an ur-ban India that is modern yet rooted, engines of growth yet models of sustainability, effi-cient yet humane.

Avinash Kumar is an IAS officer of 2023 batch, Odisha cadre. Arijit Dash is a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge.

### Crimes of passion

Sir, This refers to “Crime scene recreated; SIT probes financial angle,” Orissa POST, June 18. The institution of marriage in India, once rooted in loyalty, endurance, and moral obligation, is undergoing a disquieting transformation. A rise in crimes of passion—many involving women—reveals a growing unwillingness to endure unhappy unions. The Meghalaya honeymoon murder, where Sonam Raghuvanshi al-legedly conspired with her lover to kill her husband, Raja, is only one among several chilling examples. In Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and Karnataka, similar cases have emerged, where spouses were poisoned or harmed to pursue illicit relationships. This troubling shift reflects deeper issues: the collision of outdated marital expectations with modern impulses shaped by technology and shifting gender dynamics. Social media normalises escapism, while rigid social norms continue to stigmatise honest separations. Though media attention often sen-sationalises women as perpetrators, data from the National Crime Records Bureau shows a broader trend of rising passion-driven crimes involving both genders. Without open dialogue and structural reform, marriage may devolve from a sacred bond into a dangerous trap.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### Oil shock looms

Sir, The escalating conflict between Israel and Iran has emerged as a fresh fault line in global geopolitics, casting a long shadow over economic stability worldwide. With both sides showing no signs of de-escalation and Israel’s aggressive posture suggesting a drawn-out confrontation, global markets are bracing for extended volatility. The most immediate economic ripple has been the sharp rise in crude oil prices—Brent crude surged nearly 9% in a single week, and some analysts now warn prices could spike to \$150 per barrel. For context, oil prices remained above \$100 for over five months following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and a similar trajectory now seems increasingly plausible. Two main channels through which the conflict could severely im-pact energy markets are supply disruption and logistics. Is-rael’s targeted strikes on Iranian oil infrastructure raise the risk of sustained production cuts. A more alarming scenario would be the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz—through which nearly a quarter of the world’s oil supply passes.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH



# In a first, AI to be used for mineral exploration in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is already a leader in the auction of major minerals and has witnessed a substantial increase in mining revenue

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, June 18:** In a significant move to modernise the state's mining sector, Rajasthan will, for the first time, use Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) for mineral exploration.

Initial preparations have started, officials told IANS and said that reports will have to be submitted in this context in around 45 days.

This is the first and innovative initiative of AI-ML in Rajasthan, officials said.

Principal Secretary, Mines and Geology, T Ravikant, announced that a pilot project will be launched in Bhilwara, Bharatpur, and select areas of Chittorgarh to identify potential zones of critical and strategic minerals using AI technologies.

The project will be imple-



mented through the Rajasthan State Mineral Exploration Trust (RSMET) in collaboration with a private exploration agency notified by the Central Government.

Rajasthan is already a leader in the auction of major minerals and has witnessed a substantial increase in mining revenue.

Of the 82 types of minerals found in the state, 57 are currently being mined.

With this initiative, the government aims to accelerate the exploration of untapped and valuable mineral reserves hidden beneath the state's surface.

Ravikant explained that AI will help pinpoint high-potential mineral zones more effi-

**This is the first time AI is being employed for mineral exploration in Rajasthan. It's a transformative step that will bring speed, precision, and innovation to the sector**

DEEPAK TANWAR | DIRECTOR OF MINES

ciently than traditional methods, which are time-consuming and resource-intensive.

"The AI-based approach will save time, cost, and labour while increasing the scientific accuracy of mineral detection," he said.

The AI-based exploration will utilise data from various sources, including satellite imagery, ground penetration radar, and historical geological surveys from both central and state agencies.

The Hyderabad-based NPEA Critical Mineral Tracker, a pri-

vate firm working under the Central Government, will lead the pilot.

This agency is already active in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh and will now bring its expertise to Rajasthan.

Once the AI analysis identifies promising areas, drilling will be conducted, followed by chemical analysis of core samples.

Based on the findings, mineral blocks will be prepared for auction.

Rajasthan has extensive limestone reserves and promising potential for critical and strategic minerals such as copper, base metals, and iron ore.

Both the Union and state governments are placing special emphasis on identifying and mining these essential resources, which are key to national development and technological advancement.

# After 9-year freeze, MP govt employees to get promotions

New policy to create 2 lakh jobs



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal, June 18:** After a nine-year hiatus, the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet Tuesday approved a long-awaited promotion policy for government employees, which will help generate vacancies.

According to Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, the new policy is expected to generate at least 2,00,000 vacancies across various departments. Approximately four lakh employees stand to benefit from this decision, which marks a significant administrative shift in the state.

The policy introduces a structured promotion mechanism for state service officers. A merit list will be prepared based on seniority, ensuring timely advancement opportunities and eliminating prolonged delays in career progression. The move is expected to boost morale and improve administrative efficiency.

The policy also incorporates reservation provisions, earmarking 20 per cent of promotional posts for Scheduled Tribes and 16 per cent for

Scheduled Castes.

These measures aim to ensure equitable representation while maintaining procedural fairness.

Promotions had been suspended for nearly nine years due to a legal dispute over reservation in promotions, which was under consideration by the Supreme Court. During this period, more than 1,50,000 employees retired, including nearly 1,00,000 who were eligible for promotion. On average, around 3,000 employees retire each month in the state.

The government had filed a Special Leave Petition, which effectively stalled the promotion process during the litigation.

Minister Vijayvargiya stated that the legal department thoroughly examined all judicial options before finalising the policy. The Cabinet will now determine the effective date from which promotions will be granted.

The largest concentration of employees is in the school education and police departments, with nearly 5,00,000 personnel classified under the Class-III category.

## Heavy pre-monsoon showers bring respite from intense heatwave

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, June 18:** Heavy pre-monsoon showers lashed many districts of Rajasthan Tuesday, giving a sigh of relief to the state, which was reeling under a severe heat wave.

The highest rainfall was recorded in Sikar, which was 74 mm; Ajmer received the second highest rainfall in the state, measuring 46 mm; Kota received the third highest rainfall, measuring 23 mm. Many other districts also received heavy rainfall.

Meanwhile, minimum and maximum temperatures in almost all districts registered a dip of three degrees to seven degrees Celsius, giving relief to people who were facing the effects of sweltering heat.

Met officials said that this year, the monsoon is expected to arrive earlier than usual in Rajasthan, likely before June 25. The Arabian Sea branch of the monsoon, which had stalled in Mumbai since May 26, has picked up momentum since June 16. Within just two days, June 16 and 17, the monsoon has covered almost all of Gujarat and half of Madhya Pradesh and is approaching the Rajasthan border, and is expected to enter through the Udaipur and Kota divisions at any time this week.

Rainfall was reported in 11 districts, including the state capital. In Sikar, rains started lashing around 12 noon, while Alwar experienced intense thunder and heavy rainfall at 3:30 am. Durgapur saw intermittent drizzles throughout the morning. Cities like Jaipur, Dausa, and Sikar witnessed waterlogged roads after brief but intense spells of rain.

The Meteorological Centre in Jaipur has issued a yellow alert, forecasting that pre-monsoon showers will persist across the state until June 23 in Kota, Jaipur, Bharapur, Udaipur and Ajmer divisions.

# Tourism boom in MP

Tourist footfall increased by 526% in 2024 compared to 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal, June 18:** Madhya Pradesh recorded a 526 per cent rise in the number of domestic and foreign tourists who visited the state in 2024 compared to 2020, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said Wednesday.

He said the "holy land" of Madhya Pradesh had become the first choice of tourists, highlighting prominent attractions such as scenic hinterlands, a rich religious legacy, and diverse wildlife.

"The 526 per cent increase in the footfall of domestic and foreign tourists visiting MP in 2024 compared to 2020 is a matter of joy, immense happiness and pride for all of us," Yadav stated, highlighting the state's natural beauty, cultural richness, and amazing wildlife.

A senior official said the cultural and historical heritage, natural beauty, and diverse wildlife are attracting tourists to "Incredible Madhya Pradesh".

Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture Department and MP Tourism Board's MD, Shiv Shekhar Shukla, said a record 13.41 crore tourists visited the state in 2024 - a significant rise of 19.6 per cent compared to 2023, 50.6 per cent from 2019 and 526 per cent compared to 2020.

"The arrival of 13.41 crore tourists is the testimony to Madhya Pradesh's strong emergence as a favoured tourist destination on the tourism map of India and the world," he said, attributing the achievement to the visionary policies of the government, development of infrastructure, and active participation of local communities.



**The arrival of 13.41 crore tourists is the testimony to Madhya Pradesh's strong emergence as a favoured tourist destination on the tourism map of India and the world**

SHIV SHEKHAR SHUKLA | MD, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF TOURISM AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT AND MP TOURISM BOARD

He said 1.67 lakh foreign tourists had visited Madhya Pradesh in 2024. Among them, 33,131 visited the famous Khajuraho sculptures, while Gwalior and Orchha saw footfalls of 10,823 and 13,960 foreigners, respectively.

He said foreign visitors contributed to the development of urban tourism with 9,964 tourists visiting Indore and 1,522 Bhopal. Besides, 29,192 foreign tourists visited Bandhavgarh, 19,148 Kanha, 12,762 Panna and 11,272 Pench.

He said that compared to 2023, the number of tourists visiting religious places in the central state spiked by 21.9 per cent to 10.7 crore in 2024.

"Six of the top 10 tourist destinations in the state are religious places. Ujjain topped the list with 7.32 crore tourists--a rise of 39% compared to 2023 when 5.28 crore tourists had visited the

Ujjain district. Chitrakoot also received more than 1 crore tourists- an increase of 33 per cent compared to 2023," Shukla added. He said 1.33 crore tourists visited Maihar, while Amarkantak attracted 40 lakh, Salkanpur 26 lakh, and Omkareshwar 24 lakh.

According to Shukla, various projects including Mahakal Lok, Omkareshwar Mahalok, Shri Ram Vanagaman Path, Devi Lok, Raja Ram Lok, and Hanuman Lok have boosted religious tourism, spiritually and economically.

He said the rich heritage of Madhya Pradesh attracted more than 80 lakh tourists in 2024 - a growth of 25 per cent compared to 64 lakh in 2023.

At more than 9 lakh visitors, Gwalior witnessed a three-fold rise in tourist arrivals compared to 2023 when 3.69 lakh tourists had arrived. Sites like Khajuraho

(4.89 lakh tourists), Bhojpur (35.91 lakh tourists) and Maheshwar (13.53 lakh tourists) also figured prominently on the heritage tourism map.

Madhya Pradesh has 18 UNESCO heritage sites- three in its permanent list and 15 in the tentative list, with Bhopur being the latest addition by UNESCO, which also recognised Gwalior as "Creative City of Music".

Similarly, wildlife tourism attracted a large number of tourists.

"Green, clean and safe Madhya Pradesh is known as the 'Tiger State', 'Leopard State', 'Gharial State', 'Cheetah State' and 'Vulture State', with the highest forest area in the country," the official said.

The state has 12 national parks, 25 wildlife sanctuaries and 9 tiger reserves.

Tourists arrived at major wildlife destinations like Kanha (2.48 lakh), Pench (1.92 lakh), Bandhavgarh (1.94 lakh), Panna (3.85 lakh) and Madhai (4.34 lakh). The restoration project of African cheetahs in Kuno Palpur National Park has also drawn international attention.

He said Pachmarhi, Amarkantak, Bhedaghat, Hanuwantiya, Gandhi Sagar, Tamia, Sailani Island and Sarsi Island are major spots for natural tourism.

In 2024, 2.87 lakh tourists visited Pachmarhi, while Bhedaghat attracted 2.34 lakh tourists, with resorts, adventure, sports, trekking and camping facilities adding a new dimension to tourism.

The natural beauty at Gandhi Sagar Dam, Sailani Island, Patalkot Valley of Tamia and Sarsi Island brought tourists closer to nature, the official added.



Young men cool off in a stepwell amid scorching weather on a hot summer day, in Jaipur, Rajasthan

PTI PHOTO

# Bros dupe 70K people of ₹2,700cr over 'Smart City'

AGENCIES

**Sikar, June 18:** Two brothers from Rajasthan - Subhash Bijarani and Ranveer Bijarani - have allegedly duped about 70,000 people of Rs 2,676 crore along with their associates.

The two brothers from the Sikar district formed a company called Nexa Evergreen and allegedly duped investors by promising higher returns and plots of land in the 'Dholera Smart City' in Gujarat. They also cheated investors by showing them pictures of various Dholera city projects.

The scheme also included level income and commissions and rewards for referring others, with percentages varying by levels and rewards such as laptops, bikes, and cars for achieving certain investment milestones. They also promised additional commissions to investors if they could recruit more investors under their unique ID.

## Dholera Smart City Scam

Ranveer Bijarani first bought land in Dholera in 2014. Subhash, a retired Army personnel, also subsequently bought a land



with Rs 30 lakh that he got after retirement.

The two brothers then formed Nexa Evergreen and got it registered in Ahmedabad in 2021.

The company called itself a part of the 'Dholera Smart City' project and claimed that they have 1,300 bighas (a traditional unit of land measurement in India) of land, which is going to be converted into a world-class city.

More than 70,000 people were

lured with flats, plots and investment schemes and were promised huge profits.

About Rs 2,676 crore was raised from investors across the country.

They also chose their top officials, including Salim Khan, Sameer, Datar Singh, Rakshapal, Ompal, and Sanwamal. Through them, they got thousands of agents in Rajasthan, who got huge commissions.

About Rs 1,500 crores were distributed as commission.

They then purchased 1,300 bighas of land with the money from the fraud.

They later bought luxury cars, mines and hotels in Rajasthan, flats in Ahmedabad and 25 resorts in Goa. They took Rs 250 crore in cash and transferred the remaining money to 27 shell companies.

After the alleged fraud, they shut all their offices and fled.

The police in Rajasthan's Jodhpur then filed a case of fraud and launched a probe.

On Thursday, the Enforcement Directorate conducted search operations at 25 locations in Jaipur, Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Ahmedabad in connection with a money laundering investigation related to Nexa Evergreen fraud.

## The Real Dholera Smart City Project

The Dholera Smart City project is a joint project between the Centre and Gujarat. This is India's first greenfield smart city and is twice the size of Delhi (920 square km).

An international airport and offices of multinational companies are being built. It is expected to be developed by 2042.

# Meme-famous '90-degree' bridge to be redesigned

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal, June 18:** The controversial railway over-bridge at Bhopal's Aishbagh area, known for its sharp 90-degree turn, is set for a redesign following national criticism through social media trolls and safety concerns.

Public Works Department (PWD) sources confirmed that the bridge, which has become a viral subject of memes and ridicule on social media, will be reengineered in consultation with the Indian Railways.

"An official statement will come soon," said the sources.

Although the structure itself is not deemed structurally unsound, authorities aim to correct its severe turning radius to prevent the risk of vehicles skidding or falling. The bridge, located in a densely populated part of the city, was intended to ease congestion and streamline rail-crossing delays. However, its awkward alignment has sparked serious concerns about



vehicular safety.

Motorists have expressed confusion and discomfort navigating the sudden turn, while experts warn that the design poses a substantial hazard, especially during poor visibility or high-speed movement.

Following widespread controversy, the railway department has approved a redesign of the overbridge. With this approval, the bridge's width will be expanded by three feet.

As part of the revised plan, the existing footpath will be dismantled, and the central divider will be removed to allow

for a more functional alignment and improved turning radius. The adjustments aim to reshape the structure for safer vehicular movement.

Responding to widespread criticism, PWD Minister Rakesh Singh ordered a formal investigation by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

The agency's report recommends that vehicles should not exceed speeds of 35 to 40 km per hour while crossing the structure. Any increase beyond that could result in accidents, particularly given the lack of banking or gradual curvature. Authorities have now decided to modify the bridge's geometry without demolishing the entire structure.

Simultaneously, accountability is being pursued for those responsible for the original design, which failed to incorporate basic traffic engineering principles such as appropriate turning radius, signage strategy, and visibility standards.



of the day

quote

Last time, we contested in only 12 seats. We believe that now CPI(ML) has a very strong presence in 24-25 districts, and if we contest these seats, it will make a difference in the results. We are hopeful that CPI(ML) will get more seats this time

TEJASHWI YADAV

RUD LEADER

Congress must stop maligning India's firm and principled foreign policy just to feed its petty narratives

AMIT MALVIYA

BJP IT DEPARTMENT HEAD

The government should know that it cannot scare us with the threat of sending us to jail. If you make arrests, then the MPs, MLAs and leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party are not afraid of going to jail. The government should not test our patience

JAI RAM THAKUR

LOP IN HP ASSEMBLY

SHORT TAKES

Kidnapping case: SC grills TN govt

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Wednesday grilled the Tamil Nadu government over the suspension of Additional Director General of Police H M Jayaram, who was directed to be arrested by the Madras High Court. A bench of Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and Manmohan was informed by the state government's counsel that the officer was taken into custody and released Tuesday at around 5 pm. Jayaram's counsel submitted that he was released by the police but the government had suspended him.

Woman, 3 children found dead in pond

**Ballari (Karnataka):** Bodies of a woman and her three children were found floating in a pond in a village in Ballari district Wednesday. Police suspect it to be a case of suicide though investigation is on to ascertain the actual cause of death. According to police, the incident occurred in Dammuru village in Kurugodu taluk of Ballari district. Originally from Hosur Champa village in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra, the family was engaged in cattle herding.

Nine killed as car rams parked pick-up in Pune

**Pune:** Nine people were killed after a car rammed into a stationary pick-up vehicle near Jejuri in Pune district Wednesday evening, police said. The incident took place outside a hotel on the Jejuri-Morgaon road around 6.45 pm. One of the deceased owned the hotel. He and his staff were unloading a refrigerator from the pick-up vehicle when the accident occurred. "While the fridge was being taken out, a speeding car carrying six people veered off the road and rammed into the pick-up truck," said Tanaji Barade, deputy Superintendent of Police, Pune Rural.

Five Naxalites held in Chhattisgarh's Sukma

**Sukma:** Five Naxalites, who were allegedly involved in the recent murder of a villager, were arrested in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, police said Wednesday. The cadres, identified as Muchaki Budhra (35), Madvi Somad (30), Kunjam Bichchem (25), Madvi Dhurva (30) and Dodi Somad (30), were arrested by a joint team of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and police, a police official said. They were active in Puvarti area, the native village of Maoist leader Hidma, he said.

Munir-Trump lunch a setback; PM must brief nation on talks: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** The Congress Wednesday demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi immediately chair an all-party meeting upon his return from his three-nation tour to brief leaders on what he has told US President Donald Trump in a telephonic conversation and take the nation into confidence.

The Opposition party also said Prime Minister Modi must publicly reject President Trump's claims of having "stopped a war" between India and Pakistan if they are incorrect. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh termed Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir's scheduled lunch with Trump a "huge setback", and said the PM should have conveyed India's displeasure on it to the US president during their telephonic conversation.

Ramesh asserted that if Indira Gandhi had been the prime minister, she would definitely have conveyed her displeasure to whoever the US president would have been. Speaking to PTI, Ramesh also urged the government to form a "Pahalgam Review Committee" on the lines of the Kargil Review Committee that was set up three days after the Kargil war and was chaired by K Subrahmanyam, the late father of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

The Congress leader said the Modi government's diplomacy must depend less on optics and more on substance.

Ramesh's remarks came after Modi spoke with Trump and set the record straight that India had paused strikes on Pakistan during Operation Sindoor following a request from Islamabad and not due to mediation or a trade deal offer by the US. In his 35-min-



The Opposition party also said Prime Minister Modi must publicly reject President Trump's claims of having "stopped a war" between India and Pakistan if they are incorrect

ute phone call with Trump on Tuesday, Modi briefed the US President on Operation Sindoor and made it clear that it has never accepted any third-party mediation and will never accept it in the future, according to Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

Hours after his phone conversation with Modi, Trump repeated his claim that he stopped a war between India and Pakistan.

Sharing the video of Trump's remarks, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said one has to feel a bit sorry for the foreign secretary, who has been "left to clean up after a government that can't keep its own narrative intact".

Trump is not using a senior official to claim that he mediated between India and Pakistan, and he has been saying it himself, the Congress leader said.

Earlier, on Trump's scheduled lunch with Munir, Ramesh said, "This is a triple

“Today, we should take care of addressing them so we need a set of fintech companies which are constantly working to give solutions for the newer challenges which are arising

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

FINANCE MINISTER



GOVT STILL OPEN TO LATERAL ENTRY, SAYS JITENDRA SINGH

Union minister Jitendra Singh Wednesday said the government is still open to lateral entry recruitment and that the plan has not been abandoned yet. The lateral entry is referred to as the appointment of specialists, including those from the private sector, in the government departments



India launches ‘Op Sindhu’ to evacuate citizens from Iran

The students have travelled by road to the Armenian capital, Yerevan, under the supervision of the Indian missions in Iran and Armenia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** India Wednesday announced launching 'Operation Sindhu' to evacuate Indian nationals from Iran as the Persian Gulf nation's conflict with Israel showed no sign of letting up.

Even as India kicked off the evacuation mission, there were reports of some Indian students sustaining injuries in a strike on a medical students' dormitory in Keshavarz street area in Tehran. Iranian embassy officials in Delhi said the Iranian foreign ministry was in close touch with the Indian mission in Tehran after some students were injured.

There was no immediate comment on the reported incident from the Indian side. "India accords highest priority to the safety and security of Indian nationals abroad," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

More than 4,000 Indian nationals are living in Iran and half of them are students. The MEA said the Indian embassy in Tehran has evacuated 110 Indian students from northern Iran, assisting them in safely crossing over into Armenia Tuesday.

The students have travelled by road to the Armenian capital, Yerevan, under the supervision of the Indian missions in Iran and Armenia. "These



students departed Yerevan on a special flight at 1455 hours June 18 and will arrive in New Delhi in the early hours of June 19 as part of the initial stages of Operation Sindhu," the MEA said.

New Delhi said it is grateful to the governments of Iran and Armenia for the smooth facilitation of the evacuation process. In view of the deteriorating situation as a result of the ongoing conflict between Iran and Israel, India has been taking various steps over the last several days for the safety and security of Indian nationals in Iran.

"As part of the ongoing operation, the Indian embassy in Iran has been assisting large numbers of Indian nationals in moving from areas seeing increased hostilities to relatively safer areas within the country and to subsequently evacuate them using the available and feasible options," the MEA said.

"Indian nationals in Iran are advised to stay in touch with the Indian Embassy in Tehran through its emergency helpline, and with the 24x7 Control Room established by the MEA in New Delhi," it said.

AHMEDABAD PLANE CRASH

208 victims identified through DNA testing

AGENCIES

**Ahmedabad, June 18:** At least 208 victims of the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad have been so far identified through DNA testing and 170 bodies handed over to the families, an official said Wednesday.

The London-bound Air India flight AI-171 carrying 242 passengers and crew members crashed soon after take-off in Ahmedabad June 12.

All but one passenger on board the plane died along with at least 29 on the ground when the aircraft smashed into the hostel complex of B J Medical College.

Authorities are carrying out DNA tests to establish the identity of the victims as many bodies were charred beyond recognition. "Till Wednesday evening, 208 DNA samples have

AI to cut wide body int'l flights by 15% till mid-July

**A**ir India Wednesday announced that it is reducing international flights on widebody aircraft by 15 per cent "until at least mid-July". In a statement, the Tata Group-owned airline also said it will undertake enhanced safety checks of widebody Boeing 777 aircraft as a matter of added precaution. Air India has seen operational disruptions recently, with at least 83 of its international flights cancelled over the last six days.

been matched, and 170 bodies have been handed over to the respective families," Ahmedabad Civil Hospital's medical superintendent Dr Rakesh Joshi told reporters.

The victims whose bodies were handed over included four Portuguese nationals, 30 British nationals and one Canadian.



Vishwas Kumar Ramesh, the sole survivor of the Air India plane crash, during the cremation of his deceased brother Ajay who was flying with him on the same aircraft, in Diu

C'garh, Punjab top; Meghalaya last in school education: MoE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** Chandigarh, Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat and Odisha are among top performers in the 2023-24 Performing Grade Index that assesses school education at the district level, according to a report of the Ministry of Education.

Other top performing states and Union territories include Kerala, Daman and Diu, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the report said. Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) measures the performance of states and UTs in school education. Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL) has so far released PGI report for states and UTs for the years 2017-18 to 2021-22.

Meghalaya has been adjudged as the lowest performing state in the latest report. Puducherry, Himachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and West Bengal are among the average performers as per the index.

"The PGI has been conceptualized as a tool to catalyse transformational change in the field of school education with an objective of assessment of the relative performance of all the districts in a uniform scale," a senior ministry official said. The PGI-D structure comprises total weightage of 600 points across 74 indicators, which are grouped under six categories -- Outcomes, Effective Classroom Transaction, Infrastructure Facilities and Student Entitle-



ments, School Safety and Child Protection, Digital Learning

and Governance Process. These categories are fur-

■ Other top performing states and Union territories include Kerala, Daman and Diu, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan

■ Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) measures the performance of states and UTs in school education

■ Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL) has so far released PGI report for states and UTs for the years 2017-18 to 2021-22

ther divided into 11 domains -- Learning Outcomes and Quality, Access Outcomes, Teacher Availability and Professional Development Outcomes, Learning Management, Learning Enrichment Activities, Infrastruc-

Govt to soon notify rules for mandatory use of IST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** The government has decided to make mandatory the use of Indian Standard Time for all legal commercial, digital and administrative activities, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said Wednesday.

This initiative will translate into more secure digital transactions, accurate billing in utilities, reduced cyber-crime risks and synchronized timekeeping in transportation and communication. Presently, several systems rely on foreign sources of time.

To make Indian Standard Time (IST) mandatory, the government will shortly notify Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2025.

The draft rules were issued in January 2025 for stakeholders' feedback. On Wednesday, the Department of Consumer Affairs organized a round table conference on Time Dissemination here.

Joshi emphasised on the strategic significance of the Time Dissemination Project being implemented by the department in collaboration with CSIR-NPL and ISRO.

He said the upcoming rules will mandate synchronization of all legal, commercial, digital and administrative activities with IST, "prohibiting the use of alternative time references unless explicitly authorised".

"In today's data-driven world, the un-synchronised clocks lead to digital mismatches, investigation challenges and network inefficiencies. Several systems currently rely on foreign timing sources like GPS, posing the risk of cyber attacks, inconsistency and non-traceable time stamps," he said.

IndiGo passengers stuck on flight for 40 minutes

AGENCIES

**Raipur, June 18:** Passengers of Delhi-Raipur IndiGo flight Wednesday found themselves stuck inside the aircraft for nearly 40 minutes after landing as a technical snag prevented the door from opening. The incident stirred unease among the passengers, particularly in the wake of recent aviation incidents which included the crash of an Air India plane in Ahmedabad last Thursday killing 270 people.

Among the passengers on flight 6E-6313 were former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and Raipur Mayor Meenal Choubey. Choubey told PTI over phone that after landing in Raipur around 2.20 pm, the door of the flight remained locked for more than 30 minutes. "When we asked about the reason for the delay in opening the door, the crew said there was some technical problem, and they were trying to open it.

**HOAX BOMB THREATS**  
Bomb threats to a city airport and a private international cargo flight here Wednesday kept officials on their toes, prompting the deployment of standard measures including declaring an emergency, but they eventually turned out to be hoax claims.

ture Facilities, Student Entitlements, School Safety and Child Protection, Digital Learning, Funds Convergence and Utilisation, Attendance Monitoring Systems and School Leadership Development.

Following the same approach of state PGI, districts are graded. In PGI-D, the nomenclature for PGI scores is classified into various grades. Highest achievable grade in PGI-D is 'Utkarsh', which is for districts scoring more than 90 per cent of the total points in that category or overall.

The category and overall scores are then reduced by an equal width of 10 per cent of total points in that category or overall points for arriving to the next grade.



of the day

quote

The 526 per cent increase in the footfall of domestic and foreign tourists visiting MP in 2024 compared to 2020 is a matter of joy, immense happiness and pride for all of us



**MOHAN YADAV** | MP CM

Any kind of exploitation of workers will not be tolerated, and such managements will face consequences



**PRAMOD SAWANT** | GOA CM

We had earlier made Hindi compulsory, but in the GR issued yesterday, that compulsion has been removed. As per the new GR, students can opt for any third Indian language



**DEVENDRA FADNAVIS** | MAHARASHTRA CM

XPOST

OF THE DAY



India  
Total govt revenue: \$410 billion  
Total interest payment: \$120 billion  
Interest = 30% of revenue  
US  
Total govt revenue: \$5 trillion  
Total interest payment: \$1.2 trillion  
Interest = 25% of revenue  
Everyone in the US is worried about their debt while Indian leaders are busy distributing freebies on debt.

@Dutta\_Souravd

SHORT TAKES

Juvenile home inmate killed by 2 detainees

**New Delhi:** A juvenile home inmate lodged in a centre in north Delhi's Majnu Ka Tila was killed in a fight over bathing in the washing zone, police said Wednesday. The victim was a boy detained in an attempted murder case lodged at the Hauz Khas Police Station, as was one of the accused. The other inmate involved in the attack was booked under sections 302 (Punishment for murder) and 34 (joint liability) of the IPC by the Mundka police. Police are verifying the age of the victim and the two accused.

Southwest monsoon covers entire J'khand

**Bangalore:** Bangalore police said human bones and a skull were found inside a percolation pit at an apartment complex in Begur. "We have sent them for forensic analysis, it would take a week before we could get any other details," said an official at the Begur Police station. The bones and skull were found June 16 at MN Credence Flora Apartments at New Mico Layout, according to him.

Minors among four found dead

**Dindigul (Tamil Nadu):** Four people, including two children, were found dead in their house at Oddanchathiram in this district Wednesday, police said. Two women- aged 45 and 65 years and as many girls aged five and seven were found hanging inside their residence, they said. Police have launched a probe into the matter. Citing preliminary investigation, police suspect it to be a case of death by hanging. An issue involving another family member could have been the reason for the suspected suicide but investigation is on from different angles to unravel the case, they said.



You have a prime responsibility to ensure that all military aviation stores, whether indigenously produced or imported, meet the stringent quality and airworthiness requirements at par with the highest global standards

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT

Cal HC directs centre to resume MGNREGA in WB from August 1

AGENCIES

**Kolkata, June 18:** The Calcutta High Court Wednesday directed the Centre to implement the MGNREGA, the 100-day job guarantee scheme, prospectively in West Bengal from August 1.

The HC said the Centre is empowered to impose special conditions, restrictions and regulations, which have not been imposed in other states, so as to ensure that no irregularity occurs when the scheme is being implemented in West Bengal.

Noting that the wages for the scheme were not being paid for around three years in the state over allegations of irregularities and illegalities in disbursals to some of the recipients, the court asked the central government to impose checks and balances as required to ensure that real beneficiaries get the benefits of the funds.

Allowing the Centre to continue its enquiry into the allegations of irregularities in some districts of the state, a division bench presided by Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam directed that the scheme be implemented prospectively with effect from August 1.

The court directed that the authorities in charge of the implementation of the scheme are entitled to impose special conditions to ensure that whatever had occurred three years prior should not recur.

The court said that it is not in dispute that certain irregularities have been pointed out by the Centre in the disbursement



Mamata: Govt must release funds before sending teams

**West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee** Wednesday said the Centre must immediately release the arrears under MGNREGA scheme and other rural development projects before sending further inquiry teams to the state. "We welcome the High Court judgment. Let them (centre) restart the programme first. But this is not their money, it's public money. It's our right to get it," Banerjee said.

of wages under the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) scheme.

The bench, also comprising Justice Chaitali Chatterjee (Das), noted that with regard to allegations of irregularities, action has been initiated, recoveries made and that such amount is being maintained in a bank account of the state nodal agency of MGNREGS, West Bengal. The division bench said that at this juncture, the endeavour of the court is to ensure implemen-

tation of the scheme, which has been kept in abeyance for the past close to three years in the state. The court said that no one can allow a person who illegally took advantage of the scheme to go scot free.

The bench said that the Centre has sufficient powers to inquire into irregularities or illegalities in the manner of disbursement of the wage. The court said that there can, however, be a line drawn between past actions and future steps to be taken to implement the scheme.

It said that this would be "in public interest" and subserve the object and purpose for which the central law was enacted.

Hearing petitions seeking that beneficiaries be handed over funds due to them for work done, the court had noted that the Act provides that there cannot be an indefinite withholding of implementation of a scheme on the ground of a complaint received and that appropriate remedial measures for the implementation of the scheme have to be taken within a reasonable period.

CENTRE SIGNS MOU TO BOOST EDU FOR KIDS WITH DISABILITIES

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities on Wednesday signed a tripartite agreement with the NIOS and the NCERT to strengthen inclusive education for Persons with Disabilities (PwD)



Maha makes Hindi 3rd language in Classes I-V

An amended government resolution (GR) order issued Tuesday said Hindi will "generally" be the third language, instead of being mandatory, but gave an option to opt out if 20 students per grade in a school express the desire to study any Indian language other than Hindi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai/Pune, June 18:** The Maharashtra government has issued an order making Hindi "generally" the third language, and not mandatory, for students of Classes I to V studying in English and Marathi medium schools in the state.

After the latest government order on Hindi stirred a row and invited criticism from the Congress and MNS president Raj Thackeray, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Wednesday clarified that the "compulsion" for students to learn Hindi has been removed, and now any Indian language can be chosen as the third language as he dubbed the entire controversy as unnecessary.

An amended government resolution (GR) order issued Tuesday said Hindi will "generally" be the third language, instead of being mandatory, but gave an option to opt out if 20 students per grade in a school express the desire to study any Indian language other than Hindi.

While some Marathi lan-



guage advocates accused the government of reintroducing the "mandatory" Hindi policy through the "backdoor" after initially backtracking, the Congress accused Fadnavis of "stabbing" the Marathi people in the chest.

The School Education Department issued the GR as part of the implementation of the 'State Curriculum Framework for School Education 2024', in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

According to the GR, Hindi will "generally" be the third language for students from Classes 1 to 5 in Marathi and English medium schools.

Marathi will be a compulsory language in all medium schools, the GR said.

Critics claimed the government's latest move contradicts earlier statements of School Education Minister Dada Bhuse that Hindi would not be mandatory for primary classes.

Speaking to reporters in Pune, Fadnavis said, "We had earlier made Hindi compulsory, but in the GR issued yesterday, that compulsion has been removed. As per the new GR, students can opt for any Indian language as the third language."

EC rolls out system to deliver voter I-cards in 15 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** The Election Commission (EC) Wednesday said voter identity cards will now be delivered to electors within 15 days, virtually halving the time taken.

Till now, it took a little over a month for the Elector Photo Identity Card (EPIC) to be delivered to the voters, officials pointed out. The EC said a new standard operating procedure (SOP) has been introduced to ensure that voter cards are delivered within 15 days of new enrolment of an elector or change in particulars of an existing voter.

The new system will ensure real-time tracking of each stage right from the EPIC generation by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) till the delivery of the card to the elector through the Department of Posts (DoP), the poll authority said.

The electors will also receive notifications via SMS at each stage, keeping them informed about the status of their EPIC, it noted. For this purpose, the EC has introduced a dedicated IT module on its recently launched ECINet platform.

The new IT platform will replace the existing process by re-engineering the current system and streamlining the workflow.

Maoist cadre, an ex-school teacher, surrenders in Ch'garh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Manpur, June 18:** A senior Maoist cadre, who was a contractual teacher at a government school before joining the armed movement in 2000, Wednesday surrendered in Chhattisgarh along with his wife, who was an area committee member, a police official said.

The Maoist couple, Jeevan alias Ram Tulavi (45) and his wife Agasa alias Aarti (38) -- carrying a collective cash reward of ₹13 lakh -- surrendered in Mohla-Manpur-Ambagarh Chowki (MMAC) district, he said. They turned themselves in before Inspector General of Police (Rajnandgaon Range) Abhishek Shandilya and other senior officials citing disillusionment with "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology and exploitation of innocent tribals by senior cadres, district Superintendent of Police (SP) Yashpal Singh said.

The duo was also impressed by the district police's drive 'Operation Prayas', aimed at bringing back Naxalites into the national mainstream, and terms of the state government's new surrender and rehabilitation policy, he said.

Staff under UPS eligible for retirement, gratuity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** All central government employees part of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) will now be eligible for retirement and death gratuity benefits available under the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), Union Minister Jitendra Singh said Wednesday.

Responding to this long-pending demand by a large section of government employees, he said, the move addresses a significant demand of government staff and brings parity in retirement benefits.

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, said the new provision reflects the government's commitment to ensure social security for all categories of employees under the National Pension System (NPS). Addressing a presser on the "transformational" journey of the Ministry of Personnel,

Public Grievances and Pensions over the last 11 years, he highlighted a series of reforms aimed at simplifying governance, empowering citizens, and humanising administration.

Central government employees covered under the UPS will now be eligible for retirement and death gratuity benefits, as per the provisions of the Central Civil Services (Payment of Gratuity under National Pension System) Rules, 2021, Singh said. The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW), under the Personnel Ministry, Wednesday issued an order on the "options to avail benefits under Old Pension Scheme on death of government servant during service or his discharge from government service on account of invalidation or disability for central government servants covered under Unified Pension Scheme".



Visitors enjoy as waves crash at Marine Drive during rain, in Mumbai, Maharashtra

PTI PHOTO

Anatomy of a crime: Why are women criminals different?

Young women from small towns, accused of murdering their husbands, drew sensational headlines and misogynistic memes, breaking stereotypes in brutal ways

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** Sonam, Muskan, Shivani, Ravina, Radhika... framed in their dual identities as women and alleged 'husband killers', they have not just grabbed headlines and courted notoriety over the last months but also challenged conventional notions about femininity and crime.

The questions abound - why do women commit crimes, why are they treated differently than male criminals, are they demonstrating empowerment or signs that they are, in fact, disempowered.

It's a mix of social stigma, rigid gender roles, and unrealistic standards for women, experts said.

British criminologist Frances Heidensohn has a term for the strong societal reaction - double deviance theory.

A woman committing a crime "not only violates a legal norm but also a gender norm", explained G S Bajpai, professor of criminology and vice chan-

cellor of the National Law University in Delhi.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported over 4.45 lakh crimes against women in 2022. However, it doesn't maintain a separate category for crimes 'by' women due to their low numbers. Yet serious offences committed by women, however small in number, make an impact all their own.

Sonam Raghuvanshi Tuesday, a household name today, was taken to Meghalaya to reconstruct the killing of her husband Raja Raghuvanshi found hacked to death on a hillside, a critical step in the probe into a case that has the nation agog. The Indore couple was on their honeymoon and the bride allegedly plotted the killing along with her former boyfriend and three hitmen.

In March this year, Muskan Rastogi and her lover Sahil Shukla allegedly stabbed her husband Saurabh Rajput to death in Meerut, dismembered his body, and sealed the remains in a drum filled with cement.



In April, Bijnor's Shivani claimed her husband died of a heart attack. Police later revealed that she had strangled Deepak to death. The same month, in Bhiwani, YouTuber Ravina allegedly killed her husband with the help of a male friend after he objected to their "intimacy" and her social media activities.

Also in June, Sangli woman Radhika allegedly killed her husband, Anil, only 15 days after their marriage. Except for



Ravina who is 32, the others are in their 20s.

Then there was media executive Indrani Mukerjea, accused of killing her daughter Sheena Bora in 2012, and Jolly Joseph from Kerala, who allegedly poisoned six family members over 14 years to acquire property.

And long before, in 19th-century Kolkata was Troilokya Devi, a courtesan and India's first known female serial killer who lured women - mainly sex workers - and murdered them to

rob them of their jewellery. With an accomplice, she killed at least five women before being apprehended and was executed in 1884.

Many of the recent cases - dealing with wives killing their husbands -- triggered a flood of social media outrage and prolonged media coverage that often painted women as inherently malicious and portrayed men as helpless victims of their evil spouses. One instance of the vile and misogynist ride on social media websites was a crude callback to "Sonam Bewafa Hai" (Sonam is unfaithful) viral meme from some years ago.

Public focus is misdirected, said women's rights activist Yogita Bhayana.

"It reflects our discomfort with women breaking out of the roles assigned to them. Such societal suppression will eventually lead to outbursts. The media is sensationalising it, giving it a 'Sonam did it' spin, as if she acted alone, which she didn't-there was male involvement too," Bhayana told PTI.

Referring to the Sonam Raghuvanshi case, she said it became easier for her to plot a murder than to admit she was in love.

According to criminal psychologist Deepti Puranik, there may be a number of reasons behind such an "outburst" against social ties.

"Culture and society generally play a lot of roles when it comes to marriages. People are forced to get married against their wishes. Many people are getting married very early and at that age they haven't reached an emotional maturity level to understand the responsibility that comes with a marital relationship," she said.

"Women's mental health and internal struggles are ignored," she said.

Kulpreet Yadav, co-author of "Queens of Crime: True Stories of Women Criminals from India", said law enforcement procedures "have never truly adapted to consider women as potential perpetrators" because of the scant number of crimes by women.



# international

## of the day quote

We need support from allies and I'm here. We are ready for the peace negotiations, unconditional ceasefire. I think it's very important. But for this, we need pressure

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

If and when those decisions are made, the Department (of Defense) is prepared to execute them

PETE HEGSETH | UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Neutrality would be very beneficial for Slovakia. Unfortunately, such a decision is not in my hands

ROBERT FICO | PRIME MINISTER, SLOVAKIA

## SHORT TAKES

### Kyiv death toll climbs to 28

**Kyiv:** Flags across Kyiv were lowered to half-mast Wednesday, as Ukrainians mourned more than two dozen people killed a day earlier in Russia's deadliest strike on the capital this year. Russia sent 440 drones and fired 32 missiles during the overnight attack, said President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, partly flattening a residential building, in the latest blow to a war-weary population as diplomatic efforts to end the grinding conflict bear little fruit.

### Jaffar Express: Bomb blast derails 6 coaches

**Peshawar/Islamabad:** A bomb explosion near a railway track derailed six carriages of Jaffar Express in Sindh province of Pakistan Wednesday. No casualties were reported in the incident involving the train plying from Peshawar to Quetta, authorities said. It is the second time in four months that the Jaffar Express was targeted. Wednesday's blast occurred near the railway track close to the cattle market in Jacobabad in the Sindh province, near the volatile province of Balochistan. The explosion caused a three-foot deep and railway track of almost six feet was damaged, according to Dunya TV.

### Big blow for Thailand's PM

**Bangkok:** Thailand's Bhumjaithai Party Wednesday withdrew from Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra's government in a major blow to the embattled premier, leaving her ruling coalition with only a slim majority. The party, the second largest in the alliance and holder of 69 house seats, said its departure was due to the impact on the nation of a leak Wednesday of a phone call between Paetongtarn and Hun Sen, the influential former premier of Cambodia, with which Thailand is involved in an escalating border dispute.

### River overflows in southern China

**Beijing:** Rescue workers used rubber dinghies to evacuate people and deliver food and water Wednesday after floodwaters overwhelmed towns in southern China's Guangdong province. About 30,000 people have been evacuated in Huaiji County after days of heavy rain, state broadcaster CCTV said. More than half of the county's roads were submerged and power and internet outages were widespread.



All this leads not just to escalation, but to a direct threat to the region and the world because attacks are being carried out on peaceful atomic or nuclear facilities

MARIA ZAKHAROVA | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESWOMAN, RUSSIA

## 4 INDIAN SCHOOLS NAMED AS FINALISTS IN GLOBAL CONTEST

Four Indian schools from Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh were named among the top 10 finalists for the World's Best School Prizes, recognising their impact and earning a chance to join the Best School to Work programme



## Volcanic eruption in Indonesia forces mass evacuations



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Lembata (Indonesia), June 18:** Indonesia's Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki erupted with giant ash and smoke plumes again Wednesday after forcing evacuations of villages and flight cancellations, including to and from the resort island of Bali.

Several eruptions sent ash up to 5,000 metres into the sky Tuesday evening to Wednesday afternoon. An eruption Tuesday afternoon sent thick, gray clouds 10,000 metres into the sky that expanded into a mushroom-shaped ash cloud visible as much as 150 kilometres away.

The eruption alert was raised Tuesday to the highest level and the danger zone where people are recommended to leave was expanded to 8 kilometres from the crater.

Officers also evacuated from the Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki monitoring post 7 kilometres from the crater to avoid falling gravel released in the eruption. No casualties have been reported.

Ash and debris fell in a number of places outside the danger zone, including the villages of Boru, Hewa and Watobuku. Some residents from Nurabelen village in Ile Bura subdistrict fled to evacuation sites in Konga to avoid the impact of the eruption, the National Disaster Management Agency said in a statement.

"Some residents have also evacuated to Nileknoheng village, which is 12 kilometres from the crater," said Abdul Muhari, the National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson.

Dozens of flights Wednesday were cancelled, including those connecting Bali to cities in Australia, Malaysia, India and China, according to the website of Bali's I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport. Volcanic ash can pose a risk to plane engines.

Flights also were cancelled to and from the international airport in Labuan Bajo on another tourist destination in Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara province. The airport is still operating.

The cancellations and delays affected thousands of travellers. Australian carrier Jetstar, which flies daily between the tourist hotspot and several Australian cities, said the ash cloud was forecast to clear by late Wednesday and its services would be rescheduled.

# India, Canada to post envoys



Modi and Carney held bilateral talks Tuesday on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Kananaskis focusing on resetting the bilateral ties that plummeted to an all-time low following a diplomatic spat over the killing of a Khalistani separatist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Kananaskis (Canada), June 18:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney have agreed to pursue "constructive" steps to restore stability in India-Canada ties including the early return of envoys to each other's capitals, signalling their intent to repair the strained relations.

Modi and Carney held bilateral talks Tuesday on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Kananaskis focusing on resetting the bilateral ties that plummeted to an all-time low following a diplomatic spat over the killing of a Khalistani separatist.

The two prime ministers also underscored the importance of restarting senior ministerial

as well as working-level engagements across various domains to "rebuild trust" and "bring momentum" to the relationship, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The two leaders reaffirmed the importance of India-Canada ties, based on shared democratic values, respect for the rule of law and commitment to upholding the "principles of sovereignty and territorial

integrity", it said.

The statement assumes significance as India has been pressing Canada to not allow pro-Khalistani elements to carry out anti-India activities.

The two leaders underlined the importance of restarting the stalled negotiations on the early progress trade agreement (EPTA), with a view to paving the way for a comprehensive economic partnership agree-

# Rohingyas start mobilisation to fight rebel Arakan Army

Rohingya armed groups, meanwhile, have already started carrying out attacks on the Arakan Army in Rakhine State and are training fighters in camps along the border, read the ICG report titled 'Bangladesh/Myanmar: The Dangers of a Rohingya Insurgency.'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, June 18:** An armed group from amongst the Rohingyas who have taken refuge in Bangladesh has launched fights against the Arakan Army that virtually controls the Rakhine region driving out government troops there, the International Crisis Group said Wednesday.

The group has started recruiting fellow Rohingyas in their makeshift camps in south-eastern Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar bordering Rakhine of Myanmar, the International Crisis Group (ICG) said.

But it feared the move could be counterproductive making the Muslim minority ethnic group to be more unwarranted in greater Myanmar society and frustrate Bangladesh efforts to send them back home in Rakhine.

Bangladesh currently hosts over 1.3 million Rohingyas,



government data shows. Their influx began in 2017 to evade a ruthless Myanmar military action termed by the United Nations as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing".

The influx has continued in recent months as the fallout of armed conflict between Myanmar military and the Arakan Army in Rakhine State.

"Rohingya armed groups, meanwhile, have already started carrying out attacks on the Arakan Army in Rakhine State and are training fighters in camps along the border," read the ICG report titled 'Bangladesh/Myanmar: The Dangers of a Rohingya Insurgency.'

But the ICG said further intensification of this insurgency would cause great harm to all concerned - "Rohingya civilians, the Arakan Army and Bangladesh" when Dhaka was trying to engage with the Arakan Army since Myanmar's border with Bangladesh was now entirely controlled by the non-state-actor.

"It would heighten the risk of further bloodshed between the Buddhist majority and Rohingya Muslim minority within Ra-

khine State, as well as increase the likelihood that more Rohingyas will flee conflict across the border to Bangladesh," the report said.

"Bangladesh's main objective when it comes to Myanmar is repatriation of Rohingya refugees, who now number well over one million. Political upheaval on both sides of the border has not altered this goal," the ICG said.

In November 2024, Yunus appointed a former Bangladeshi UN official, Khalilur Rahman, as the high representative for Rohingya affairs and "other priority issues" and later simultaneously tasked him as the security adviser. The ICG said "in February, he (Rahman) held talks with counterparts from the Arakan Army's political wing."

"The interim government has proposed establishing a humanitarian corridor into Rakhine State and lobbied the UN successfully to convene a 'high-level conference' on the Rohingya in late September, on the sidelines of the General Assembly, with the aim of drawing up solutions to the crisis," the report pointed out.

# Berliners dive into Spree River to reclaim access after a 100-year ban

Around 200 people jumped into the slow-moving, greenish water Tuesday to show that it's not only clean enough, but also lots of fun to splash and swim in the Mitte neighbourhood along the world-famous Museum Island

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Berlin, June 18:** A century after the city of Berlin banned swimming in the Spree River because it was so polluted it could make people sick, there's a push by swimmers to get back into the water.

Around 200 people jumped into the slow-moving, greenish water Tuesday to show that it's not only clean enough, but also lots of fun to splash and swim in the Mitte neighbourhood along the world-famous Museum Island.

A group calling itself Fluss

Bad Berlin, or River Pool Berlin, has been lobbying for years to open the meandering river for swimmers again.

"For 100 years now, people have not been allowed to swim in the inner-city Spree and we no longer think this is justified, because we can show that the water quality is usually good enough to go swimming during the season," said Jan Edler, who is on the board of Fluss Bad Berlin and helped organize Tuesday's swim-in.

To circumvent the ban, the group registered their collec-



tive swim event as an official protest.

Standing on a little staircase that leads down to the Spree canal, which flows around the southern side of the island, Edler stressed that "we want

the people to use the Spree for recreation again."

He pointed to the fact that the river has been cleaned up thoroughly, and that the water quality has improved in the last decade and is constantly being

monitored.

Even city officials in the central Mitte district of Berlin say they'd be interested in introducing river swimming again in 2026. "There are still many things that need to be clarified, but I am optimistic that it can succeed," district city councilor Ephraim Gothe told German news agency dpa recently.

Supporters of lifting the swimming ban also point at Paris, where the Seine River was opened up for swimmers for the Olympic Games last year and will be opened this summer for Parisians. Swimming there had been banned since 1923.

In Vienna, too, water lovers can splash into the Danube River canal, in the Swiss city of Basel they can bathe in the Rhine, and in Amsterdam there are some designated areas

where people can plunge into the canals.

Only in Berlin, swimming has been continuously prohibited in the Spree since May 1925, when the German capital closed all traditional river pools because the water was deemed too toxic. Some of those pools weren't only used for recreational swimming, but were a place for poor people to wash themselves if they didn't have bathrooms at home.

These days, the water is clean on most days, except when there's heavy rain, which leads to some water pollution.

Allowing swimmers to dive into the river would also mean loosening the historical monument protection on some parts of the riverbanks to install easy access ways to the water and places for lifeguards.



of the day

quote

(FRRB) will take at least six months or more to come to a conclusion in IndusInd Bank and Gensol case. It is a long drawn process

CHARANJOT SINGH NANDA | PRESIDENT, ICAI

By joining ONDC Network for B2B, we align with the government's vision of fostering an open and inclusive e-commerce ecosystem

KETAN KULKARNI | CEO, ALLCARGO GATI

According to IDC, 80 per cent of business data is unstructured. Most unstructured data is text-based, meaning pertinent information lives within email conversations, social media posts, word processor documents or audio and video transcripts

MANI VEMBU | CEO, ZOHO

SHORT TAKES

SEBI eases FPIs rules

**Mumbai:** SEBI Wednesday decided to simplify rules and ease regulatory compliance for Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) that invest exclusively in Indian government securities (G-Secs). The move is aimed at attracting more long-term bond investors to India. Currently, foreign investors invest in Indian debt through three routes -- General, Voluntary Retention Route (VRR) and the Fully Accessible Route (FAR).VRR and FAR allow investments without many restrictions, such as security-wise or concentration limits.This comes in the wake of increasing interest in the country's debt market through routes such as VRR and the FAR. Under the approved relaxations for FPIs investing in G-Secs, the periodicity of mandatory KYC review for such FPIs will be harmonised with RBI's requirements. Accordingly, such foreign investors will have less frequent mandatory KYC reviews. With regard to the timeline for disclosing material changes, the regulator has decided a uniform 30-day window for all material change disclosures for IGB-FPIs. At present, FPIs are required to report key changes within 7 or 30 days based on the type of change.

SFL revises FD interest rates

**Chennai:** Shriram Finance Ltd (SFL) would revise its interest rates on fixed deposits with effect from June 26, the company said Wednesday. As per the revised structure, senior citizens would be eligible for an additional interest of 0.50 per cent per annum. For deposits of 12 months, the existing rate of 7.65 per cent would be revised to 7.35 per cent while for deposits made through digital mode for a period of 15 months would be revised to 7.50 per cent from the current 7.90 per cent, Shriram Finance said in a company statement Wednesday.

BOM, SBI Card sign MoU

**New Delhi:** Bank of Maharashtra (BOM) Wednesday entered into a strategic co-branding partnership with SBI Card to launch co-branded credit cards tailored to meet the evolving financial and lifestyle needs of its customers. Under this partnership, bank customers will be able to access a range of co-branded credit cards, designed with attractive features including reward points, cashback offers, fuel surcharge waivers, EMI facilities, and exclusive merchant discounts across key spending categories like dining, travel, and e-commerce, Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) said in a statement.



The government has decided to make mandatory the use of Indian Standard Time for all legal, commercial, digital and administrative activities

PRALHAD JOSHI | FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS MINISTER

SILVER SHINES, GOLD GAINS

Silver prices rallied ₹1,000 to hit a record high of ₹1,08,200 per kilogram while gold gained ₹540 to stay above ₹1 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital Wednesday as the Israel-Iran conflict intensified on its sixth day. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal had closed at ₹1,07,200 per kg in the preceding session Tuesday



Stock markets fall 2nd day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, June 18:** Sensex and Nifty closed lower Wednesday as soaring tensions in the Middle East and caution ahead of US Fed interest rate decision hit investor sentiment.

30-share BSE Sensex declined by 138.64 points or 0.17 per cent to close at 81,444.66. The 50-share NSE Nifty edged lower by 41.35 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 24,812.05, marking its second day of losses.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services was the biggest loser dropping by 1.79 per cent. Adani Ports fell by 1.55 per cent, Hindustan Unilever by 1.35 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 1.16 per cent, and Nestle by 0.95 per cent. Losses in ICICI Bank, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, NTPC and HCL Tech also dragged the index down.

IndusInd Bank surged by 5.12 per cent after a report expressed optimism over its performance in the coming 12 months. Titan rose by 1.99 per cent, Mahindra & Mahindra by 1.24 per cent and Maruti by 1.12 per cent.

The BSE midcap and small-cap indices ended 0.34 per cent lower each. Among BSE sectoral indices, IT dropped 0.76 per cent; BSE Focused IT declined 0.75 per cent, utilities (0.75 per cent), power (0.67 per cent), commodities (0.66 per cent) and metal (0.65 per cent).

However, consumer durables index climbed 0.75 per cent, consumer discretionary (0.38 per cent), auto (0.37 per cent) and bankex (0.03 per cent). As many as 2,447 stocks declined while 1,531 advanced and 137 remained unchanged on BSE.

Palm oil prices surge

REUTERS

**Mumbai, June 18:** Indian refiners cancelled orders for 65,000 metric tons of crude palm oil (CPO) scheduled for delivery from July to September following a sudden surge in benchmark Malaysian prices, four trade, said sources.

Refiners in the world's largest palm oil importer cancelled the orders in the past three days after Malaysian palm oil futures rose more than 6%, hedging their risk against the prospect of falling prices by locking in a profit. "There is a lot of volatility in the market. There was more margin in cancelling bought CPO than in importing, refining, and selling refined palm oil in the local market," said an Indian buyer who operates a refinery on the west coast and cancelled shipments for July delivery.

Indian buyers made CPO purchases nearly a month ago around \$1,000 to \$1,030 per ton including cost, insurance, and freight, after a rebound in palm oil production brought down prices to their lowest in more than eight months.

This week, palm oil futures jumped, tracking a rally in Chicago soyoil futures after the US proposed higher biofuel blending volumes. The sudden rise prompted Indian refiners to cancel contracts at between \$1,050 and \$1,065 per ton, making a profit of more than \$30 per ton.

India slips to 71st place on Energy Transition Index

India's rank has fallen from 63rd last year, the WEF said India and China experienced the greatest overall improvement among large economies, especially in increasing access to energy and strengthening transition readiness

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** Helped by significant improvement in energy efficiency and investment capacity, India has been ranked 71st on a global Energy Transition Index released Wednesday by the World Economic Forum.

Sweden topped the list of 118 countries, followed by Finland, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland in the top five. China was ranked 12th, the US was 17th and Pakistan at 101st place. Congo was ranked lowest.

While India's rank has fallen from 63rd last year, the WEF said India and China experienced the greatest overall improvement among large economies, especially in increasing access to energy and strengthening transition readiness.

The WEF said the top five largest economies – China, US, EU, Japan and India – will ultimately determine the pace and direction of the global energy



transition due to their sheer size.

Together, they account for around half of the global GDP, population and total energy supply (TES), and also nearly two-thirds of global emissions, giving them an outsized influence through their consumption patterns, investment flows and policy choices.

Over the past decade, India

has made significant strides in increasing equity through greater access to energy and clean fuels, while also improving energy regulations and investment in renewable and other clean-energy technologies.

WEF said that continued improvement in grid reliability, energy access for rural areas and further reducing dependence on imported energy may

enable further progress in energy security and equity.

"Further investment in infrastructure, renewables, labour force development and financing conditions could help boost the country's energy transition," it added.

India also made progress in lowering energy intensity and CH4 emissions, creating more favourable energy regulations and increasing clean energy investments, it said.

While 77 of 118 countries improved their scores in 2025, the share of countries advancing across all three energy dimensions – security, sustainability and equity -- was only 28 per cent, highlighting that the majority still progressed unevenly.

The US led in energy security, while India advanced in energy efficiency and investment capacity.

The WEF said global progress towards secure, equitable and sustainable energy is accelerating after years of sluggish

EMERGING ECONOMY

India to become data centre and chip manufacturing hub

Moody's Analytics reports that AI investments are surging globally, with India, Singapore, and Malaysia emerging as top destinations for data centers and chip manufacturing. Despite slowing global trade, strong AI demand drives capital flows, with US tech firms expanding abroad to meet supply gaps and tap supportive Asian markets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** Developed and emerging economies in East and Southeast Asia are key targets for AI investments, with India, Singapore and Malaysia rapidly establishing themselves as prime destinations for data centre projects or chip manufacturing, Moody's Analytics said Wednesday.

In its report titled AI Is Beating the Odds, Moody's Analytics said at a time when cross-border investment is slowing and global trade is fracturing, spending on artificial intelligence (AI) is powering against the current.

"Even though trade and geopolitical tensions are knocking economies, soaring AI demand is outpacing supply. To close



the gap, global investors are pouring capital into data centres and semiconductor projects," it said.

The report further said that US share of outbound AI investment outpaces its inbound share, a sign that US tech giants are expanding their global footprint.

India's growing economy and digital talent pool make it an attractive location for data centre providers and chip production, it added.

ROUTINE CHECK: SCB ON RBI SCRUTINY

INDO- ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, June 18:** After reports surfaced that Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) is facing Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regulatory scrutiny in India over alleged lapses in derivatives sales, the lender Wednesday said the Apex Bank conducts annual inspections of banks, and this is just part of a routine examination.

According to reports, the central bank raised concerns following alleged sales by the lender to small and medium-sized enterprises of target redemption forwards, "a product that

can cause significant losses".

The RBI also raised issues regarding the bank's maintenance of reserves and the accounting treatment of forward rate agreement trades in previous fiscals. A Standard Chartered spokesperson told that the Reserve Bank conducts an annual inspection of banks.

"While we don't want to comment on specifics, observations, if any, are highlighted and addressed as part of the normal process," the spokesperson added.

Though, RBI didn't express its comments over scrutiny. In February this year, SCB appointed P.D. Singh as its chief



executive officer (CEO) for India and South Asia, effective from April 1. Singh succeeded Zarin Daruwala.

In April, SCB shifted to larger office premises at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) City, reinforcing its long-term commitment to India's premier international

financial services hub.

"In line with the government's vision of Viksit Bharat, GIFT City is rapidly emerging as a critical gateway for international investors and institutions, looking to be a part of India's economic growth story," said Singh.

Over the last couple of years, SCB has invested significantly in capability building, involving product suite, talent and technology, across its corporate and institutional banking business.

The bank is the first foreign bank to commence operations at GIFT IFSC and has played a

Vi, AST SpaceMobile to begin satcom service on smartphones

This is the second merger of telecom service provider in satcom service battle. Earlier, Elon Musk's Starlink signed a pact with Reliance Jio and Mittal's Bharti Airtel, received the license from TRAI as well

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 18:** Telecom operator Vodafone Idea Wednesday announced a partnership with Elon Musk-owned SpaceX rival satcom firm AST SpaceMobile for delivering satellite service on smartphones directly.

AST SpaceMobile is building

the first and only space-based cellular broadband network accessible directly by smartphones, designed for both commercial and government applications, Vodafone Idea said in a statement.

Vodafone Idea's promoter firm Vodafone Plc has already signed a pact with AST SpaceMobile.

During 2024, AST SpaceMobile has secured additional strategic investment from AT&T, Verizon, Google and Vodafone, and new contract awards with the United States Government, directly and through prime contractors. The company has agreements with more than 45 mobile network operators globally,

"This partnership will bring together Vi's robust national network with AST



SpaceMobile's revolutionary space-based cellular technology, which connects directly to everyday smartphones without the need of any specialised software or device support or updates," the statement said.

Vi said that it will collab-

orate with AST SpaceMobile on the SpaceMobile Satellite System.

"This space-based cellular broadband ecosystem will be designed to expand Vi's telecom services of terrestrial connectivity, providing voice, video,

data streaming, and internet access. It will encompass the design, implementation, and launch of this system, wherein AST SpaceMobile will develop, manufacture, and manage the satellite constellation, and Vi will oversee terrestrial network integration, operating spectrum, and market access," the statement said.

"India, with its vast and dynamic telecom market, is the ideal place to demonstrate how our space-based cellular broadband can seamlessly complement terrestrial networks. We are not just expanding coverage; we are breaking down barriers to connectivity, enabling everyday smartphones to access 4G and 5G directly from space," AST SpaceMobile Chief Commercial Officer Chris Ivory said.

Vi and AST SpaceMobile will also collaborate to develop commercial offerings for diverse sectors, including consumer, enterprise and IoT, the statement said.

Musk-owned SpaceX is also working on similar technology to provide satellite service directly on smartphones.

Starlink, is a satellite internet service developed by SpaceX, has already signed pacts with Ambani's Reliance Jio and Mittal's Bharti Airtel, which together control more than 70 per cent of the country's telecom market, to bring US satellite internet giant's services to India.

Earlier in the month, Starlink has received a licence from the telecom department for providing satellite internet services in India.



SHORT TAKES

India drawn alongside Pakistan, Australia, SA

**New Delhi:** India has been drawn alongside Pakistan, Australia, South Africa and two yet to be known qualifying teams in Group 1 of the 2026 Women's T20 World Cup, set to be played from June 12 to July 5 in England. The tenth edition of the tournament, running across 24 days, will open with hosts' England taking on Sri Lanka at Edgbaston June 12. Apart from Edgbaston, Hampshire Bowl, Headingley, Old Trafford, The Oval, Bristol County Ground and Lord's are the other tournament venues. Edgbaston will also be the venue for India's campaign opener against Pakistan June 14, before playing against a qualifying team at Headingley June 17. India will face South Africa at the Old Trafford Cricket Ground June 21, and then play against another qualifying team at the same venue June 25. India's group stage will come to an end with a high-stakes clash against multiple times champions Australia at the Lord's Cricket Ground June 28.

Members call AITA EC meeting

**New Delhi:** AITA President Anil Jain, against whom a no-confidence motion was proposed by state associations last year, has requested the Delhi High Court to declare null and void the federation elections conducted in September 2024, prompting irate Executive Committee members to call for a meeting June 27. One of the affiliated units of the All India Tennis Association (AITA) had alleged at that time Jain had used his position in the federation for personal gains. The no-confidence motion, though, was withdrawn ahead of the AGM that elected a new body. But since the election results remained with the court in a sealed envelope due to a petition filed by Somdev Devvarman and Purav Raja challenging the validity of the polls, the newly-elected office bearers remained outside the system.

Four-Nation tourney: Colts depart for Berlin

**New Delhi:** India's junior men's hockey team left for Berlin Wednesday to compete in a four-nation Tournament from June 21 to 25, continuing its preparations for the World Cup to be held later this year. Led by captain Arajjeet Singh Hundal with Amir Ali as his deputy, the Indian colts, who left early this morning from Bangalore, will begin their campaign against host nation Germany June 21. They will then face Australia June 22, followed by Spain June 24 during the round-robin stage. All matches will take place in Berlin. The tournament will conclude with classification matches June 25, where the top two teams from the pool will compete for the championship, while the remaining two will contest the third-place position. Barca sign Joan Garcia Barcelona: Barcelona is signing Espanyol goalkeeper Joan Garcia, who was once linked to a move to Arsenal, to a six-year contract, the Spanish champion said Wednesday.

Batting reboot faces acid test

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Leeds (UK), June 18:** The stage is set for one of the most eagerly anticipated contests in modern Test cricket as India take on England in the first Test of the five-match series at Headingley, Leeds, from June 20. Despite the name change from the Pataudi Trophy, the rivalry remains as intense as ever, steeped in history, fuelled by recent drama, and shaped by evolving identities.

India arrived in England with a point to prove. Despite being the most dominant side in white-ball cricket in recent times, their Test fortunes have dipped significantly. The 3-0 whitewash at home against New Zealand in early 2024, followed by a 3-1 series defeat in Australia, has pushed them down the rankings.

This series offers them a chance to reset, but they will do so with a team in transition, most notably, under the captaincy of Shubman Gill. With veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli absent from the squad, as well as the legendary R Ashwin, India will field a younger, less experienced side, with KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja offering the spine of continuity and resilience.

During a press conference to announce the Test squad, chief selector Ajit Agarkar cited Karun Nair's strong domestic performances and familiarity with English conditions as key reasons for his selection. Nair played 10 County Championship matches across two seasons (2023-2024) for Northamptonshire, scoring 736 runs at 56.61.

His return follows a mountain of runs for Vidarbha in the 2024-25 season, including 863 runs at 53.93 in a title-winning Ranji Trophy campaign. Prior to that, Nair had an impressive 50-over season, hitting five hundreds in eight innings at an average of 389.50 in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

England, on the other hand, have built a formidable reputation under the Bazball philosophy since June 2022, winning eight out of their last 12 Test series. They are the undisputed



pioneers of aggressive Test cricket in the modern era, having redefined tempo and intent.

However, while their batting continues to flourish, there are significant concerns about their bowling unit, especially following the retirement of James Anderson and Stuart Broad. With injury setbacks to Jofra Archer, Mark Wood, and Olly Stone, the hosts are forced to rely on a relatively inexperienced pace attack featuring Brydon Carse and Chris Woakes to lead the line.

While Woakes brings experience and excellent home conditions numbers, Carse has made a strong impression since debuting against Pakistan, with 27 wickets at under 20 in five Tests.

The contest at Leeds could well be defined by how India's batting lineup copes with England's restructured attack. KL Rahul, who notched a memorable century at Lord's in 2021 and has been in commanding form against England Lions in the lead-up, will be pivotal.

Likely to open with Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rahul brings both ex-

**INDIA'S SQUAD:** Shubman Gill (c), Rishabh Pant (wk), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Sai Sudharsan, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Karun Nair, Nitish Reddy, Ravindra Jadeja, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Washington Sundar, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana

**ENGLAND'S SQUAD:** Ben Stokes (c), Shoaib Bashir, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Sam Cook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jamie Smith, Josh Tongue, Chris Woakes

perience and adaptability. Rahul's head-to-head with Woakes is an interesting subplot — he's only fallen once to the seamer in four innings but has scored just 34 runs in that span, suggesting a tense duel in the early overs.

The other key match-up at the top involves Shubman Gill, who has a strong record against young spinner Shoaib Bashir. If Gill can settle into his probable No 4 role, he could lend calm to an untested middle-order.

This middle-order, miss-

ing the gravitas of Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara, will face a stern challenge from England's bowlers. Though lacking in star power, the English attack will test the visitors with relentless lines, backed by the in-your-face philosophy that has become Bazball's trademark.

India will look to Jadeja's experience and Gill's flair to steer them through England's middle-over onslaughts. Much of India's challenge will hinge on withstanding the new ball — if Rahul and Jaiswal can provide stability, the likes of Gill and Karun Nair could capitalise later.

For England, the backbone of their challenge lies in the form of their top-order firepower, but with the ball, they will hope Woakes continues his home dominance and Carse can replicate his early Test success under the pressure of a marquee series. Shoaib Bashir will look to exploit the rough and hold one end, especially if the pitch begins to offer anything in the second half of the Test.

Inter Milan held to draw by Monterrey

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Pasadena (USA), June 18:** Inter Milan was held to a 1-1 draw by Monterrey in the Club World Cup opener Tuesday night in the Italian power's first match since losing the Champions League final.

Veteran Spanish star Sergio Ramos scored on a stunning first-half header for Monterrey, delighting the decidedly pro-Mexico crowd in Southern California for Monterrey coach Domènec Torrent's own debut.

Lautaro Martínez evened it late in the first half for Inter, but the Champions League finalists couldn't generate a second goal despite having nearly 62% possession while Monterrey got only one shot on target.

Inter manager Cristian Chivu made his debut as the Nerazzurri returned to competition at the Rose Bowl just 17 days after taking that 5-0 thrashing from Paris Saint-Germain in Munich.

After the 39-year-old Ramos put Los Rayados ahead, Martínez answered in the 42nd minute with a tap-in of Carlos Augusto's pass after a world-class sequence of ball movement from a setpiece.

Martínez thought he scored

again in the 68th minute, but was offside. Both teams narrowly missed goals in the final minutes, and Martínez picked up a yellow card in second-half injury time.

Chivu started only seven of Simone Inzaghi's choices for the Champions League final. Ailing striker Marcus Thuram came on early in the second half to replace 22-year-old Sebastian Esposito, who started his first game back from seven loan stints since his previous appearance for Inter in 2020.

Key momentInter carried play early, but Ramos capitalized on Monterrey's first corner kick by outjumping two defenders and converting an acrobatic header. The Real Madrid stalwart and World Cup winner joined Monterrey four months ago.

TakeawaysInter still hasn't shaken off the disappointment in Munich, but both teams now have a good chance to advance from a group also including River Plate and Urawa Red Diamonds.

Ramos can still summon greatness in the twilight of his career. The matchless center back will also throw out the first pitch at the Los Angeles Dodgers game Wednesday.



HC junks BCCI's petitions, asks it to pay ₹538 crore to defunct IPL franchise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, June 18:** The Bombay High Court has dismissed the petitions of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) challenging arbitral awards of over Rs 538 crore in favour of the now-defunct Indian Premier League franchise Kochi Tuskers Kerala.

In the order passed Tuesday, Justice R Chagla said there is no "patent illegality" in the arbitral awards that requires the court's intervention. It has asked BCCI to pay the amount.

The Kochi Tuskers Kerala franchise had been awarded to a consortium led by Rendezvous Sports World (RSW) and later operated by Kochi Cricket Private Limited (KCPL).



The team participated in the IPL in 2011, but their contract was terminated by the BCCI the following year.

The dispute revolved around BCCI's termination of agreements on the grounds that KCPL and RSW allegedly failed to furnish a requisite bank guarantee.

The KCPL and RSW initiated arbitration proceedings in 2012, terming the termination wrongful.

The arbitral tribunal ruled in their favour in 2015. It awarded over Rs 384.8 crore to KCPL and ordered the return of over Rs 153.3 crore to RSW along with interest and costs.

The BCCI had challenged these orders before the HC.

Bulls' unbeaten run continues; Redz see first win

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, June 18:** The Chennai Bulls continued their unbeaten run in Season 1 of the Rugby Premier League (RPL), as they were held 26-26 by Kalinga Black Tigers at the Shahaji Raje Bhosale Sports Complex (Andheri Sports Complex), here Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Redz also picked up their first win of the competition against the Mumbai Dreamers, who are yet to win a game.

The Chennai Bulls and the Kalinga Black Tigers played out an absolute thriller which ended 26-26 in the opening

game of the day, and after that, the Delhi Redz defeated the Mumbai Dreamers by a margin of 20-7. The results will see the Chennai Bulls retain their top spot on the points table.

It was the Kalinga Black Tigers, who were out of the blocks the fastest, with Perry Baker getting the first try of the game, and Maurice Longbottom promptly converted too.

After that, the Chennai Bulls equalised Joaquin Pellandini's try and kick. That was the lull before the storm, as the Tigers went through the gears before half-time as Kyle Tremblay and James Thiel added a



try each, and Longbottom managed to convert another

kick. Just before the break, Aryan Dixit scored a try for

From streets, tennis cricket going global

Global Tennis Cricket League, first-ever international tennis ball league, to be held in Sharjah

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, June 18:** From streets and local grounds, tennis ball cricket will be getting an elevation to the international stage with the launch of the Global Tennis Cricket League (GTCL60) in Mumbai.

A bold new chapter in the world of tennis ball cricket, GTCL60 is designed as the world's premier 60-ball tennis cricket league and will feature eight dynamic international teams competing in Sharjah.

The star-studded launch event was graced by prominent personalities including Indian cricketer Piyush Chawla, Bollywood actor Sohail Khan, actor Vindu Dara Singh, music director Sajid, and cricketer Iqbal Abdulla.

The GTCL60 will be played in Sharjah, UAE, bringing together top tennis ball cricketers from around the world on an international stage. With a match format of 10 overs per side (60 balls), each game promises explosive action from the very first ball.

Speaking at the launch, Amin Pathan, Founder of GT-



CL60, said, "We're proud to launch a league that speaks to the heart of every player who has ever dreamed of going from the street to the spotlight. We will be conducting trials across 30 cities to ensure no talent is left behind. Today marks the official beginning of a league that will inspire, uplift, and transform the way tennis ball cricket is seen

worldwide."

Former Indian cricketer Piyush Chawal said, "Every cricketer starts with tennis ball cricket — even I did. This league is a massive platform for young talent from the grassroots. It will give real opportunities to raw, street-level players and bring their skills to the forefront. For young cricketers, GTCL60 can be a

**The GTCL60 will be played in Sharjah, UAE, bringing together top tennis ball cricketers from around the world on an international stage. With a match format of 10 overs per side (60 balls), each game promises explosive action from the very first ball**

true game-changer."

The selection process will begin with open registrations, followed by extensive selection trials to be held across 30 cities in India and abroad. From these trials, the most promising talents will be shortlisted and finally enter a professional player draft, where franchises will select their squad members.

Registrations will open soon, and players can look forward to playing in the Global Tennis Cricket League in Sharjah.

Eves go down fighting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, June 18:** A poor display in penalty shootout cost the Indian women's hockey team dearly as it lost 0-2 to Argentina after the Salima Tete-led side came back from two goals down in a FIH Pro League match here Wednesday.

The Indians wasted chances galore to suffer their fourth consecutive defeat in the European leg of the league.

The Indian women went down 2-3 and 1-2 to Australia here before losing 1-4 against Argentina Tuesday.

Agustina Gorzelany (27th and 37th minute) converted two penalty corners for Argentina, which was the difference between two sides initially as

