



## Shifting norms

Actror Fatima Sana Shaikh shares her thoughts on how society's views around women and marriage are slowly evolving

LEISURE | **P2**



## War toll tops 58k

Gaza's Health Ministry says that more than 58,000 people have been killed in the war

INTERNATIONAL | **P10**



## Govt eases rule

Govt relaxes sulphur emission rules for most coal-fired power plants to balance costs, climate and compliance

BUSINESS | **P11**



## India wobble

Washington Sundar put India in the best possible position to win the Lord's Test before batters stuttered to 58 for four, chasing 193

SPORTS | **P12**

### SHORT TAKES

#### Shringla, Nikam among 4 nominated to RS

**New Delhi:** Former foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Special Public Prosecutor in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks case Ujjwal Nikam, Kerala BJP leader C Sadanandan Master and historian Meenakshi Jain have been nominated to the Rajya Sabha (RS). In a notification issued late Saturday night, the Union Home Ministry said the President has nominated the four to the Rajya Sabha. The President nominates 12 people to the Rajya Sabha, who are people of eminence in various fields.

**P9**

#### Bihar: Many Nepalese, Bangladeshis found

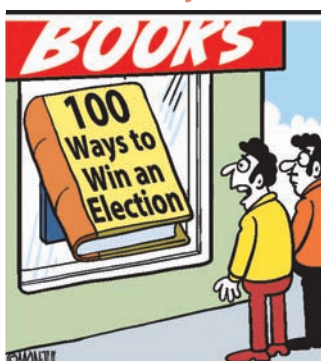
**New Delhi:** Field-level functionaries of the Election Commission (EC) have found 'a large number of people' from Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar during house-to-house visits made for the ongoing intensive review of voters' list in Bihar, officials said Sunday. They asserted that the names of illegal migrants will not be included in the final electoral roll to be published September 30, after proper enquiry of such people is conducted after August 1. Citing ground reports, EC officials said that during house-to-house visits 'a large number' of people from Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar have been found by booth-level-officers. The EC will eventually carry out a special intensive revision of electoral rolls across India to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth.

#### 2-day state visit of Prez begins today

**New Delhi:** President Droupadi Murmu will be on a two-day visit of the state from Monday, her office said in a statement. The President will grace the fifth convocation ceremony of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhubaneswar Monday, it said. On July 15, Murmu will grace the 13th annual convocation of Ravenshaw University and also lay the foundation stone for the redevelopment of three buildings of Ravenshaw Girls' High School at Cuttack, said the statement issued Sunday. She will also grace the birth anniversary celebration of Adikabi Sarala Das and present the Kalinga Ratna Award-2024 at Cuttack, it added.

**P3**

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



**Authored by whom? An autocrat, a booth-grabber, or an EC insider?**

## 'Plough justice' rocks Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput/Narayanpatna, July 13:** A couple in Peda Itiki village under Bargi panchayat of Narayanpatna block in the district was subjected to humiliating punishment for marrying within the same clan as a kangaroo court allegedly forced them to plough the village road with a wooden yoke tied to their backs, a report said.

The matter came to the light after a video of the incident went viral, days after a similar case in neighbouring Rayagada district made headlines. Sources said, the 18-year-old girl and the 21-year-old man were reportedly in a relationship for nearly five years. They are said to belong to the same clan and are considered

cousins under tribal customs. They had eloped and got married, defying societal norms and age-old community traditions.

Later, their families and relatives lured them back to the village promising their marriage. Upon their return, some village elders declared the marriage invalid due to their shared lineage and insisted that they must undergo a ritualistic punishment called 'Balada Danda' (plough justice) to absolve them of their so-called sin. They tied them a yoke and made them to till the village road. The couple was later sprinkled with coconut mixed water as part of a 'purification' ritual. Narayanpatna police station IIC Pramod Kumar Nayak said Sunday that a probe has been launched into the incident.

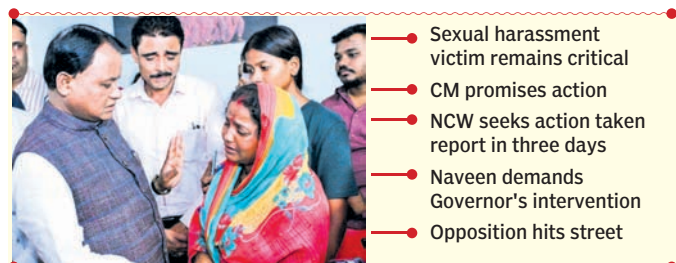
PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 13:** As the 20-year-old student from FM (Autonomous) College who immolated herself on the college campus in Balasore Saturday over alleged sexual harassment by a teacher battled for life at the AIIMS Bhubaneswar Sunday, Opposition parties staged protests, demanding resignation of state higher education minister.

Amid protests over the incident, which came to light days after the gangrape of another college girl on Gopalpur beach, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi went to AIIMS Bhubaneswar after returning from a three-day tour to Delhi. Majhi said the government is ensuring the 'best possible treatment' for the student.

"The condition of the student is critical. She is being provided treatment akin to that available in AIIMS, Delhi. A medical team is formed for her treatment. The government will consider airlifting the patient after her condition stabilises," he said.

"We will take strong action as soon as the Higher Education department committee report is available," he said,



- Sexual harassment victim remains critical
- CM promises action
- NCW seeks action taken report in three days
- Naveen demands Governor's intervention
- Opposition hits street

adding that the government would also take measures to prevent such kind of incidents in state's educational institutes. Majhi also met the parents and family members of the student at the hospital.

The student remains on ventilator support and her condition has been described as 'highly critical' by hospital authorities. Dialysis has started with the hope of keeping her alive, the officials said.

"About 95 per cent of her body has suffered severe burns. Her kidneys and lungs are also affected due to the fire and smoke inhalation," Dr. Ashutosh Biswas, executive director, AIIMS Bhubaneswar, said.

A 10-member expert medical team has been constituted, comprising specialists from anaesthesiology, pulmonary med-

icine, nephrology, burns, and plastic surgery, he said.

LoP Naveen Patnaik, OP-CC president Bhakta Charan Das and BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida condemned the sexual harassment incident. Patnaik expressed 'shock' over the incident and termed it as 'deeply distressing' and sought the Governor's intervention.

Both the BJD and Congress leaders have sought appointment with President Droupadi Murmu, who is scheduled to undertake a two-day visit to the state from Monday.

Describing the incident as 'deeply disturbing', National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar asked the DGP to 'ensure a fair and time-bound' investigation. She sought an action taken

report within three days.

The activists of both the BJD and Congress also hit the streets and staged demonstrations before the residence of the Chief Minister and Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj. Meanwhile, a three-member high-level committee, headed by Higher Education Director Kali Prasanna Mohapatra, grilled the college principal for three hours and also talked to students to ascertain facts.

The second-year student of the Integrated BED programme had set herself on fire, demanding action against a teacher who allegedly sexually and mentally harassed her. The Women and Children Wing of the state Crime Branch took up the case suo motu and started an investigation. The state government suspended college principal Dilip Ghose and prime accused Samira Kumar Sahu who was also arrested in the case.

Meanwhile, the girl's father and brother held the college authorities responsible for her suicide attempt. Several ministers and leaders of different political parties visited AIIMS Bhubaneswar and met the family members of the victim.

# Battle for life, justice

# Vedanta donates ₹97cr to BJP; BJD gets ₹25cr

*Vedanta Limited continued to extend its largess towards political parties, albeit judiciously, despite the Supreme Court banning Electoral Bonds last year. Billionaire Anil Agarwal's mining conglomerate nearly quadrupled its donations to the ruling BJP in FY 2024-25 (till March 31, 2025) by contributing ₹97 crore (from ₹26 crore in the previous fiscal). On the contrary, the company put ₹10 crore in the Congress party's kitty in the corresponding period, a massive drop from ₹49 crore in FY 2023-24. Interestingly, BJD emerged as the second highest beneficiary of the mining major's political donations by upping its share to ₹25 crore - from ₹15 crore during FY 2023-24 - despite suffering drubbings in the Assembly and Parliamentary elections in the state.*

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 13:** Billionaire Anil Agarwal's mining conglomerate Vedanta Limited nearly quadrupled its donations to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), contributing ₹97 crore in the fiscal year ending March 2025, according to its latest annual report.

Under 'Miscellaneous Expenses', Vedanta detailed the political donations as well as the manage-



ment and brand fee expenses it paid to its parent, London-listed Vedanta Resources Plc.

Political donations totalled ₹157 crore in 2024-25, up from ₹97 crore in the previous financial year. While donations to the BJP soared, those to the Opposition Congress were cut to just ₹10 crore. The donations in fiscal year April 2024 to March 2025 (FY25) included 'contributions to BJP of ₹97 crore (₹26 crore in fiscal year ended March 31, 2024), BJD of ₹25 crore (March 31, 2024: ₹15 crore), JMM of ₹20 crore (March 31, 2024: ₹5 crore) and AICC of ₹10 crore (March 31, 2024: ₹49 crore)," according to the annual report for 2024-25.

Vedanta has been one of the biggest donors to political parties. In 2022-23, it had donated a total of ₹155 crore to political parties and ₹123 crore in FY22 (April 2021 to March 2022). Beneficiary-wise, the breakup was not provided for the previous donations. It had, through the now-scrapped electoral bonds donated, ₹457 crore to political parties in the five years of their existence starting 2017.

# Biggest piece of Mars on Earth to go under hammer

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**New York, July 13:** For sale: A 54-pound (25-kilogramme) rock. Estimated auction price: \$2 million to \$4 million. Why so expensive? It's the largest piece of Mars ever found on Earth.

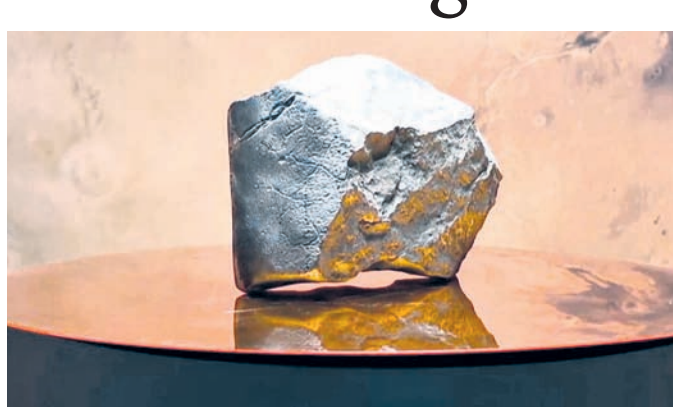
Sotheby's in New York will be auctioning what's known as NWA 16788 Wednesday as part of a natural history-themed sale that also includes a juvenile Ceratosaurus dinosaur skeleton that's more than 6 feet tall and nearly 11 feet long.

According to the auction house, the meteorite is believed to have been blown off the surface of Mars by a massive asteroid strike before travelling 140 million miles to Earth, where

it crashed into the Sahara. A meteorite hunter found it in Niger in November 2023, Sotheby's says.

The red, brown and gray hunk is about 70% larger than the next largest piece of Mars found on Earth and represents nearly 7% of all the Martian material currently on this planet, Sotheby's says. It measures nearly 15 inches by 11 inches by 6 inches.

"This Martian meteorite is the largest piece of Mars we have ever found by a long shot," Cassandra Hatton, vice chairman for Science and Natural History at Sotheby's, said in an interview. "So it's more than double the size of what we previously thought was the largest piece of Mars."



It is also a rare find. There are only 400 Martian meteorites out of the more than 77,000 officially recognised meteorites found on Earth, Sotheby's says. Hatton said a small piece of

the red planet remnant was removed and sent to a specialised lab that confirmed it is from Mars. It was compared with the distinct chemical composition of Martian meteorites discov-

ered during the Viking space probe that landed on Mars in 1976, she said.

The examination found that it is an 'olivine-microgabbroic shergottite,' a type of Martian rock formed from the slow cooling of Martian magma. It has a coarse-grained texture and contains the minerals pyroxene and olivine, Sotheby's says.

It also has a glassy surface, likely due to the high heat that burned it when it fell through Earth's atmosphere, Hatton said. "So that was their first clue that this wasn't just some big rock on the ground," she said.

The meteorite previously was on exhibit at the Italian Space Agency in Rome. Sotheby's did not disclose the owner.



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

**GaneshaSpeaks.com**  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**  
Today you will feel like going green, and Ganesha approves. You could plant a sapling, or organise some dustbins to keep the neighbourhood clean. If you wish to make the world a better place to live in, do it but take it step by step.

**TAURUS**  
Much to the disappointment and annoyance of your friends and associates, you are likely to act unduly possessive and self centred about persons and objects, warns Ganesha. Be sure, your overprotective attitude is not likely to amuse anyone. To make matters worse you will possibly ignore their well founded resentment and instead of setting matters right, you will be running after material gains.

**GEMINI**  
You will ponder over religious and cultural values and issues today. You will indulge in a fair amount of discussion with your family members over the issue and present your thoughts and feelings on the subject.

**CANCER**  
The day looks set to be an ordinary day, for both work and play, says Ganesha. Yet, if you are planning to participate in an event or a competition today, march ahead, by all means. There will, practically, be no one who'll be able to compete with you. On other fronts, expect things to be rather calm and mundane, with no significant ups and downs.

**LEO**  
A moment once lost is not going to come back. So, it's about time you realised the value of time, says Ganesha, because time is money. On this day, set everything to a schedule and figure out your tasks right down to the brass tacks. Personal organisers are a good bet, but if you are old school, then maybe you would rather prefer a diary and a calendar.

**VIRGO**  
Your communication and creative abilities are your best weapons. You will be overflowing with zest for life and will exude cheerfulness. However, Ganesha warns that your creativity will bloom fully only in situations where there is no pressure or strain.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says you will try to gain in-depth knowledge about new technological inventions in your spare time today. Some of you may have queries regarding higher education that you may be able to take up today and reach a conclusion about.

**SCORPIO**  
Till now you have experienced all the highs. Today you may come across the lows of the professional world. The equation between your boss, colleagues and you may get slightly disturbed. However, you will make it up by evening. Freshers may look for some career opportunities.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Being a part of all things bright and beautiful will remain the highlight today, says Ganesha. You may don the hat of an activist and fight injustice and discrimination in the right spirits. Even if you are asked to conquer the world, you will be able to do it today, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
Today, you will not be in the right mood to work or produce expected results. Mounting work pressure may further dampen your self-confidence, foretells Ganesha. The dullness will vanish in the air by the evening and you will be back to your happy self. Are you wondering who will be responsible for this change? The answer is your friends and family members.

**AQUARIUS**  
You spend a lot of time planning for a better future. Sure, it does minimize the chances of errors as you know possible obstacles in advance. But, the time you spend for calculations takes you away from the reality and you don't fully concentrate on what you have now. Learn to balance, advises Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You know how important money is and you will think about it all day. You will think less about expenses today and more about prosperity and fame today. Worry about family might increase and in return they will support you, says Ganesha



## MOMOA TURNS REAL-LIFE HERO

Jason Momoa, attending the Harley-Davidson Homecoming Festival in Milwaukee, sprang into action after a minivan crash near Veterans Park. He assessed the scene, helped direct traffic, and offered support while police and paramedics attended to the unconscious driver, who was later confirmed to be under the influence.

## FELISHA COOPER ACCUSES BLAKE LIVELY OF RACISM

Felisha Cooper, known for her roles in *The Bold and the Beautiful*, has accused Blake Lively of racism and cruelty in a recent podcast interview. Cooper claims Lively's dismissive behavior caused emotional distress to her acting coaches and that Lively refused to acknowledge her.



# Tamannaah redefines glamour



**Mumbai:** Actress Tamannaah Bhatia, in her latest Instagram post, spoke about embracing duality in both style and identity.

Pairing a black sequined gown with a casual grey t-shirt, she highlighted how contrasting elements can coexist beautifully. The actress also explained that for her, fashion is not just about trends; it's a personal expression where glamour meets comfort and strength meets softness.

Sunday, the *Baahubali* actress took to her Instagram handle and shared a couple of her stylish photos. In the caption, Tamannaah reflected on the power of layering, both in fashion and identity. The actress wrote, "The art of layering A black sequined gown and a grey t-shirt may belong to two different worlds — but for me, they feel like they were meant to meet. Because contradiction isn't conflict. It's where masculine edge and feminine instinct find harmony. It's also the art of layering — not just in what I wear, but in who I am. Clothes, jewellery, identity — none of it needs to be singular. Casual glamour isn't a trend. It's my language. And it's always layered."

Known for her impeccable sense of style, the *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar* actress consistently serves major style inspiration with her striking photos shared on social media.

IAN S



# Followers don't define talent: Sumbul

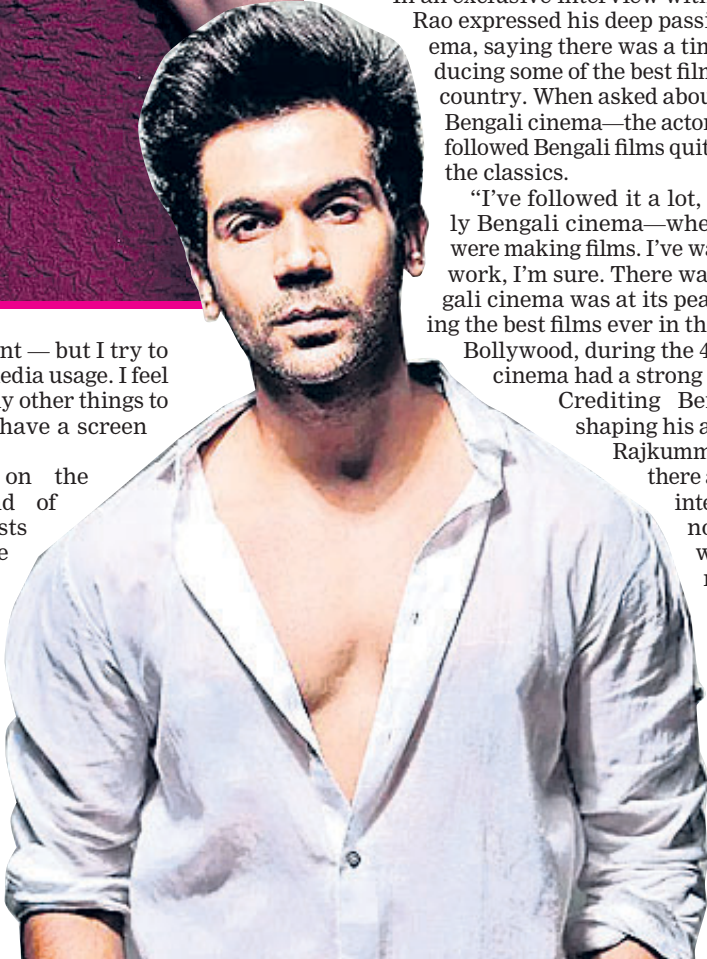
trends—especially in today's casting decisions.

The television actress shared that she believes in staying true to herself rather than pretending to be someone else, and ensures that social media doesn't take control of her life. Expressing the same, Touqeer told this news agency, "It can be an addiction if you let it control you. I have never been addicted to it because I understand that social media is for us, and we are not for social media."

"Social media is very important for an actor because that's the only way you can connect with your fans. There are so many supporters and fans who come and interact with you, they send you blessings and love, so it

is really important — but I try to limit my social media usage. I feel there are too many other things to focus on. I even have a screen limit set."

Commenting on the increasing trend of judging artists by their online presence, Sumbul expressed that follower count should not be the deciding factor when casting someone. She believes that an actor's talent and body of work should take precedence over digital popularity.



# Rajkummar's admiration for Bengali cinema

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actor Rajkummar Rao, who recently featured in the action thriller *Maalik*, has opened up about his admiration for Bengali cinema.

In an exclusive interview with this news agency, Rao expressed his deep passion for Bengali cinema, saying there was a time when it was producing some of the best films ever made in the country. When asked about his connection to Bengali cinema—the actor shared that he has followed Bengali films quite closely, especially the classics.

"I've followed it a lot, especially the early Bengali cinema—when Ray and Ghatak were making films. I've watched most of their work, I'm sure. There was a time when Bengali cinema was at its peak. They were making the best films ever in this country. Even in Bollywood, during the 40s and 50s, Bengali cinema had a strong influence."

Crediting Bengali cinema for shaping his artistic perspective, Rajkummar added, "I'm sure there are still some really interesting filmmakers now, but I haven't watched too many recent Bengali films, to be honest. The last one I saw was *Labour of Love*, which I absolutely loved—it was by Aditya Vikram Sen-gupta. But yes, I feel very connected to it. And there are a lot of Bengalis around me, even otherwise, in life."

IAN S

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

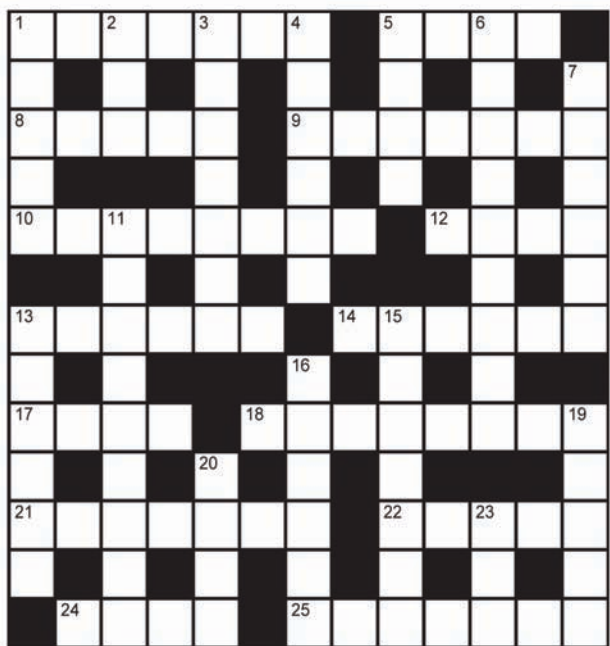


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



- Across**  
1 "Get lost!" (4,3)  
5 Fellow  
8 Vacuous  
9 Took a chance  
10 Wall hanging  
12 Fairy tale villain  
13 Voracious eels  
14 Colossus of Rhodes, e.g.  
17 Hammer's target
- Down**  
18 Screenwriter's creation  
21 Worship  
22 Food fish  
24 Nipper  
25 South West Africa, now  
1 French seaport  
2 Microwave  
3 Amazing adventure  
4 Model's asset
- Across**  
5 Deep sleep  
6 Amphibious reptile  
7 Stick to  
11 Frugality  
13 Praying insect  
15 Dickens boy (4,3)  
16 Filter  
19 Port of old Rome  
20 Assistant  
23 Heavenly body

## 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.

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

## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

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

### SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



FOR A CAUSE

Members of Gopabandhu Seba Sangathan take part in a plantation drive at Banki In Cuttack Sunday



# Immolation ire spills onto streets



Members of Naba Nirman Yuva Chhatra Sangathan stage a protest outside Deputy CM Pravatı Parida's residence demanding her resignation over FM College female student's self-immolation bid



Youth Congress leaders break a barricade to march toward Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj's residence at Unit 6 in City Sunday



Members of Youth and Student wings of BJD, including Byomakesh Ray and Devi Ranjan Tripathy, marching towards CM's residence while being prevented by security personnel in Bhubaneswar Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 13:** Student and youth wings of several prominent political parties held demonstrations, demanding justice for the girl, who set herself on fire over alleged sexual harassment meted out to her by the Head of the Education department at Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College in Balasore recently.

Biju Chhatra Janata Dal (BCJD) and Biju Yuva Janata Dal (BYJD) staged protests and tried to gherao CM Mohan Charan Majhi's residence here, demanding his as well as the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and State Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj. BJD MLAs Byomakesh Ray and Devi Ranjan Tripathy, along with several senior BJD leaders, tried to break the security barricades while marching towards

## NCW SEEKS REPORT IN 3 DAYS



Taking suo motu cognizance of a student of FM Autonomous College resorting to self-immolation over an alleged sexual harassment incident in Balasore, the National Commission for Women (NCW) Sunday asked the DGP to take strict action against the culprits. Describing the incident as “deeply disturbing”, NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar has asked the Odisha DGP to “ensure a fair and time-bound” investigation. The NCW also asked the Odisha police to take strict action against the accused and extend all necessary medical and psychological support to the victim free of cost. “An action-taken report must be submitted to the Commission within three days,” the NCW said. The commission said that a 20-year-old woman student of a government college in Balasore allegedly self herself ablaze after facing sexual harassment and academic threats by the head of the department. The student is admitted to hospital in critical condition with 90 per cent burns.

the CM's residence, but were quickly detained by the security personnel.

BJD youth and student leaders alleged that the state government is

trying to cover up the incident and shift blames, while its own affiliated student bodies, which often takes to the streets over trivial issues, have

remained silent on such a grave issue. Similarly, the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) and Youth Congress gheraoed the official residence of the State Higher Education Minister demanding his resignation.

NSUI state president Udit Pradhan, State Youth Congress president Ranjit Patra and several other leaders from the party joined demonstration. “The BJP has failed to protect its own member of the student wing. Besides, they have ignored her ordeal. We want the CM and State Education Minister to resign immediately,” Pradhan said.

Naba Nirman Yuva Chhatra Sangathan also staged demonstration in front of Deputy CM Pravatı Parida's residence, seeking immediate justice for the victim. The outfit raised slogans against the government, alleging that the state has failed to ensure women's safety.

## Khera dubs incident 'national tragedy'

NEW DELHI: Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said it is a “national tragedy” that a young woman in Odisha was forced to set herself on fire after facing relentless sexual harassment by her college's HoD. “She pleaded for help - informally to the Principal, formally to the Internal Complaints Committee, and publicly to the CM and Education Minister on social media. Yet, her complaints went unheard,” Khera said on X. A BJP MP had demanded the HoD's suspension, but even he was brushed aside by the college principal, the Congress leader claimed.

ACTION PLANS WILL BE TAKEN TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS SET IN THE VISION DOCUMENT TO BUILD A PROSPEROUS ODISHA BY 2036 AND A DEVELOPED INDIA BY 2047

## Discussion with PM over development projects fruitful: CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, July 13:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday said he held a “fruitful” discussion with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi to accelerate development projects in the state.

Speaking to mediapersons at the airport here after returning from Delhi, Majhi said he visited the national capital to pay homage to the father of Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

The union minister's father Daulal Vaishnaw died at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jodhpur July 8.

Majhi said he held a detailed discussion with PM Modi for 35 minutes Saturday on the execution of proposed mega projects for the development of the state. “The discussion was fruitful and focused on how to accelerate development in Odisha as compared to other states in the coming days,” he stated.

The Chief Minister also said that action plans will be taken to achieve the goals set in the vision document to build a prosperous Odisha by 2036 and a developed India by 2047.

“On this occasion, important discussions were held regarding various developmental activities in Odisha, future strategies, coordination between the Centre and the state, and accelerating the state's overall progress. The Centre and the state are committed to working together to achieve the goals of a prosperous Odisha and a developed India,” Majhi said in a post on X on Saturday after meeting the PM.

During the visit, Majhi also met President Droupadi Murmu and presented the vision document booklet.

He also met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP's general secretary (organisation) BL Santosh.

## My daughter was pressured to withdraw plaint: Victim's dad

**BHUBANESWAR:** The father of the 20-year-old college student who attempted self-immolation after allegedly being denied justice in a sexual harassment case Sunday claimed that his daughter was pressured by college authorities to withdraw her complaint. Blaming the principal of state-run Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College, Dillip Ghose, the father told reporters in Bhubaneswar, “My daughter's friends told me that she set herself on fire minutes after meeting the principal. She had gone to his chamber to know the findings of the Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) probing her allegations. The principal told my daughter that the ICC did not find any evidence to support her sexual harassment allegations against Samira Kumar Sahu, Hod, Education department,” the father said, alleging that the news may have worsened her mental distress, leading her to set herself on fire. Ghose had said the victim met her in his chamber and he counselled her. He had also told the victim that the college authorities might take action against her for levelling false allegations against a teacher, the father said. The victim's father also alleged that Sahu had threatened to sabotage her academic records if she did not comply with his demand for “favours”. “When she lodged a complaint with the ICC against him, he brought together a few students and started claiming that all her allegations were baseless. She was under immense mental stress. The principal also did not provide any consolation to my daughter,” he added. The victim's father also claimed during his meeting with the principal, the latter had assured him not to worry and that he will resolve whatever issues are there. The student had lodged the complaint against the teacher June 30 and launched a protest on the college campus July 2. Her brother said she had also posted a message on X, pleading for justice and tagging the CM, Higher Education minister, local MP, MLA, and other officials. Ghose, who was suspended Saturday, said, “I feel threat to my life and have sought protection from Balasore district administration.”

## Dialysis starts; next 48 hours vital: AIIMS doctors

**BHUBANESWAR:** The health condition of the 20-year-old FM Autonomous College student, who tried to immolate herself over inaction in alleged sexual harassment meted out to her, remained critical, with doctors at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar starting her dialysis as part of the initiation of renal replacement therapy, a treating medical practitioner said. The second-year student of the integrated B Ed programme at the college in Balasore had Saturday set herself on fire, demanding action against a teacher who had allegedly sexually assaulted and mentally harassed her. Dialysis commenced following consultation with experts from AIIMS Delhi, said Sanjay Giri, Additional Professor and HoD, Department of Burn and Plastic Surgery at AIIMS Bhubaneswar. Giri said the hospital authorities have informed the patient's family about her health condition. She shows a high heartbeat rate at 180 per bpm (beats per minute) even under ventilator support, he said. “About 95 per cent of the victim's body has suffered severe burn injuries. Her kidneys and lungs are also affected. She is currently on critical care support,” AIIMS Bhubaneswar Executive Director Ashutosh Biswas told reporters here Sunday. The woman was admitted to AIIMS Saturday and hospital authorities said that the next 48 hours are vital and the victim is not showing any sign of improvement. Stating that doctors of multiple departments were engaged in the treatment of the student, Biswas said that her entire body has been burned except for some patches on her face. “At this moment, we cannot say anything,” he said. Hospital sources said apart from doctors of the burn department, experts of critical care, surgery, nephrology, and pulmonology are monitoring her health condition round-the-clock. AIIMS Bhubaneswar has constituted a 10-member expert committee comprising doctors from anaesthesia, pulmonary medicine, burn, nephrology and other departments. “The committee can co-opt any other faculty member of any other critical department as and when required,” an office order said.

# H5N1 OUTBREAK: GOVT CULLS OVER 6,700 BIRDS



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 13:** A day after bird flu (H5N1) outbreak was confirmed in a poultry farm in Puri district, the state government has swung into action as it has culled over 6,700 birds as part of containment measures, a senior official said Sunday.

The state government resorted to mass culling of the birds after the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, confirmed that samples collected from Bada Ankula in Delang block of the district tested positive for the H5N1 avian influenza virus, he added.

The official also said that more than 6,700 birds were culled Saturday and Sunday following standard operating procedure (SOP) lay down by the Union government.

Sarat Kumar Behera, chief district veterinary officer

## Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Minister Gokulananda Mallik visited the bird flu infected area to take stock of containment measures

(CDVO), Puri, informed that seven rapid response teams (RRTs) along with health teams have been deployed in the area where bird flu cases were detected.

“We have completely restricted the movement of live birds in and out of the infected zone,” he said.

After completing culling within a 1-km radius of the village, samples from another five villages have been collected to

test for the virus, Behera said. Sources said the village had witnessed unusual poultry deaths over the past week, but the outbreak was officially confirmed only after villagers raised concerns and officials collected samples July 9.

Meanwhile, Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Minister Gokulananda Mallik visited the bird flu infected area to take stock of containment measures taken to prevent further spread of the virus.

The Minister has said that immediately upon confirmation, the State Government initiated urgent containment and control measures to prevent further spread of the disease. Seven Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) were mobilized by F&ARD Department to undertake culling, disinfection, sanitation, and surveillance activities in the infected zone.

Compensation for the culled birds will be disbursed to the affected poultry farmers as per the guidelines of Govt. of India within two days to ensure their livelihoods are protected.

The Minister further said that biosecurity measures have been enforced in a ten-kilometre surveillance zone around the epicentre.



**DIARRHOEA HITS RAVENSHAW:** Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling, Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj and Cuttack Sadar MLA Prakash Sethi, among others, enquires about the health condition of a student of Ravenshaw University where diarrhoea has broken out

OP PHOTO

# Lightning strikes claim four lives in state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar/Jajpur, July 13:** Four persons, including a woman, were killed due to lightning strikes in Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, Sambalpur and Bhadrak districts Sunday, police said.

A 65-year-old farmer died in lightning in Balabhadrapur vil-

lage under the Jenapur Police Station limits in Jajpur district, a senior officer said.

The incident occurred when he was working in his agricultural fields, he said.

“Other farmers and labourers working there saw him lying in the field after the lightning strike. They took him to the Dharmasala Community

Health Centre, where a doctor declared him dead,” the officer said. The body of the farmer was sent for post-mortem examinations, and a case of unnatural death was registered, he said, adding that the investigation is underway.

Another man died in a lightning strike while he was taking shelter under a tree in the

Kuchinda area of Sambalpur district, police said.

Lightning struck a young woman when she visited a garden in Bhadrak district, another officer said.

A farmer died as lightning struck him when he was returning from an agricultural field in Kujang area in Jagatsinghpur district, he added.







# Female elephant electrocuted

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Naktideula, July 13:** A six-year-old female elephant was electrocuted late Saturday night after coming in contact with a solar fencing illegally connected to a high-voltage transmission wire at Tikilipada village under Sarapali forest beat of Naktideul forest range in Sambalpur district.

Despite instructions to use solar fencing only, a local farmer had allegedly linked the wire to the main electricity line to ward off elephants, leading to the fatal accident, Forest officials said.

Following the incident, the Forest personnel detained the villager responsible for the illegal connection.

A Special Task Force (STF) team from Bhubaneswar visited the site Sunday afternoon and launched an inquiry. Reports indicate that elephants have been regularly straying into Tikilipada village over the past few days, damaging crops and properties. The incident occurred when a herd of nine elephants strayed into the village Saturday night. With the help of Forest staff and locals, the herd was driven back towards the jungle. While retreating through a scrubland near a paddy field, the female elephant came in contact with the live wire and was electrocuted at around



2.30am. Redhakhol Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Eliarasan K confirmed the incident.

Senior Forest and Power department officials, including Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) T Ashok Kumar, Redhakhol DFO Eliarasan K, Naktideul Range Officer Ashwini Kumar Behera, and a veterinary team visited the spot Sunday morning.

The elephant's post-mortem is scheduled for Monday, the DFO said.

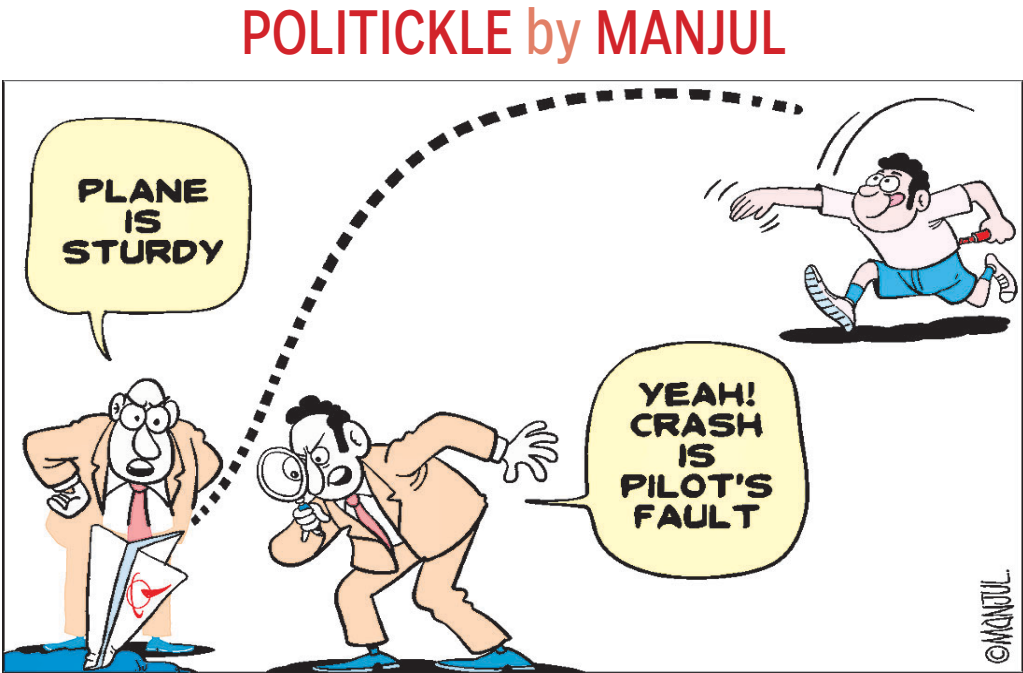
Notably, this is not the first such incident in the area. Earlier, a female elephant had died after coming into contact with a 33 KV transmission line near Chhatapada in the Ghosramal forest section August 17, 2024. Similarly, on November 18, three elephants were electro-

## CM orders probe

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday ordered a high-level probe into the death of the six-year-old female elephant in Sambalpur district. Expressing deep grief over the incident, Majhi said that the persons involved in the incident will not be spared and strict action will be taken against the accused, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said. On the instructions of the Chief Minister, a team of officers led by Chief Conservator of Forest Manoj Nair has left Bhubaneswar for Naktideula to investigate the incident, it said. Besides, senior Forest officers and Energy department officials of the concerned areas have visited the spot to investigate the incident, the statement said. The death of the six-year-old jumbo was reported a day after another female wild elephant was found dead near a crop field at Saharguda village in Angul district. The Forest department officials suspected that the elephant, around 15 years old, died due to illness.

cuted in the Ghosramal forest section after stepping on an illegally laid power trap meant for wild boar poaching November 18, 2024.

Officials said these recurring jumbo deaths highlight the urgent need for stricter monitoring and public awareness on the dangers of illegal electrification in forest fringe areas.



## Realtor held for ₹5-cr scam; 200 duped

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, July 13:** Odisha Police has arrested a 43-year-old realtor in Ganjam district for allegedly duping over ₹5 crore from nearly 200 people under the pretext of allotting residential plots, officials said Sunday.

The accused has been identified as Chetan Kumar Choudhury, son of a former president of the district Congress unit.

According to police, Chetan of Gosaninuagaon in Berhampur city allegedly collected monthly instalments from

buyers through his office staff since August 2019 with the assurance to allot plots to them in September 2021. However, when the investors began demanding their promised plots on the due date, Choudhury allegedly refused responsibility, claiming the receipts issued were fake and that he had no knowledge of the scheme. On Saturday, an investor lodged a police complaint against Choudhury.

Based on his complaint, a criminal case was registered against him under different sections of BNS and an investi-

gation was launched. Another case was also pending against him in Bada Bazar police station here, they said. Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused swindled over ₹5 crore from around 200 people under the pretext of providing residential plots though a detailed monthly money investment scheme, Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek M said.

Police seized the layout plan of the proposed plots, money receipts, daily collection slips and some other documents from the possession of the accused, he said.

## Press body submits memorandum to CM over scribe's murder

**Malkangiri:** The District Journalist Coordination Committee Sunday submitted a memorandum to Malkangiri SP Binod Patil, addressed to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, demanding swift action in the brutal killing of web journalist CH Naresh. The journalists urged the government to arrest the culprits immediately, enact a Journalist Protection Act, and provide ₹10 crore in ex gratia to the victim's family. The memorandum came a day after Naresh, a web channel reporter, was hacked to death by five unidentified assailants in Muraliguda village under Motu police limits while on assignment. He had gone to the area with two colleagues for news coverage when the attackers, riding two motorcycles, launched a sudden assault with sharp weapons. While his companions managed to flee, Naresh was caught and brutally attacked, suffering deep wounds to both arms, which resulted in excessive blood loss. Locals rushed him to the Motu Community Health Centre, from where he was referred to the district headquarters hospital. He died en route. Naresh's murder has triggered shock and anger among the journalist fraternity in Malkangiri and beyond. Despite repeated calls over the years from media bodies for a law to protect working journalists, no such legislation has been enacted in Odisha.

## Man dies, 35 hurt as bus overturns after collision

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, July 13:** A man was killed and 35 others were injured as a passenger bus overturned after being hit by a truck on the bypass road near Chalanti village under this police limits in Balasore district Sunday.

The deceased was identified as Malaya Mohanty, 45, of Kharida village in Bartana panchayat of Jaleswar block. Among the injured, 12 persons in critical condition have been admitted to the district headquarters hospital in Balasore.

The mishap occurred when a bus named 'Geetanjali' with 50 passengers on board was on its way to Baripada from Bhograi via Jaleswar.

The bus was negotiating a diversion road when a West Bengal bound truck hit it from the rear. The bus overturned under the impact of the collision.

On being informed, locals rushed to the spot and rescued the injured passengers trapped inside the bus. Later, they rushed the injured passengers to GK Bhattar hospital in Jaleswar. There the doctors administered them primary treatment and rushed the 12 injured persons in ambulances to the district headquarters hospital in Balasore. However, Mohanty succumbed to his injuries near Rupsa.

The truck driver had fled the scene after the mishap but people caught him near the Laxmannath toll plaza and informed the police. Police seized the truck and took the driver in its custody. An investigation was launched while Jaleswar Municipality Chairman Pratap Pradhan visited the hospital and met the injured passengers undergoing treatment.



**PITIAL CONDITION:** People continue to wade through knee-deep water to attend to their work Sunday as floodwater is yet to recede from 30 villages under seven panchayats of Baliapal block in Balasore district

## Students cross reservoir to attend school

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sunabeda/Semiliguda, July 13:** In the absence of a bridge, students from several villages under Charangul panchayat in Semiliguda block have been forced to risk their lives as they have to cross the Kolab reservoir by country boat daily in order to reach their school.

Children from six villages including Lenjiguda, Khalpadi and Gaudaguda, who study at Jagannath Vidyapeeth and TRW High School, have to cross the reservoir in unsafe country boats, a situation fraught with danger.

Years ago, the government had provided a motorised boat to ferry the students. But for the past three years, it has remained defunct. Not only is the boat out of service, but it also lacks an operator, the



students said.

This issue affects not just the students, but the entire local population. Residents of these villages rely on the boat for day-to-day needs, including travel to hospitals, banks and

tehsil office. While taking the road would require a detour of nearly 15 km, crossing the reservoir reduces the journey to just one kilometre.

Villagers allege that although a bridge was sanc-

tioned by the previous government, the project has remained buried under bureaucratic red tape.

When contacted, Charangul panchayat sarpanch Phulmati Pujari confirmed that funds for the bridge had been approved and the Rural Development department had completed a survey. However, she admitted ignorance about the reason for the delay in construction. She also acknowledged that the motor of the government boat was non-functional and that the BDO had been informed.

Local MLA Ramachandra Kadam, when alerted to the children's risky commute, stated that all necessary arrangements for the bridge construction had been completed. He assured that tenders would be floated soon and construction work would begin by year-end.

## Gaur population on rise as Ghumusar forest turns safe haven

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhajanagar, July 13:** The northern forest division of Ghumusar forest in Ganjam district has emerged as a secure habitat for wildlife, with officials observing a notable rise in the population of the rare Indian bison or gaur. Alongside gaurs, numbers of black panthers, elephants, and spotted deer have also shown an increase in recent years.

Locals have even reported sightings of a rare melanistic leopard, commonly referred to as 'black panther', in one of the forest ranges. The presence of this elusive species has generated considerable excitement.

Forest officials attribute this positive trend to in-

creased enforcement of forest laws, which has significantly reduced illegal tree felling. Since the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme, the demand for firewood has sharply declined, contributing further to the preservation of forest cover. While isolated issues of encroachment, timber theft and poaching persist in certain forest patches, the Ghumusar North division remains largely protected. Last year also saw a significant drop in forest fires—an outcome credited to heightened public awareness campaigns.

At present, over a hundred gaurs are believed to be roaming safely within the Malati reserve forest which forms



the core of this division. To support the growing population, the Forest department is constructing new water bodies and rehabilitating old

ponds. Grazing grounds are also being prepared. Watchtowers are being planned to monitor their movements more effectively.

Although no official gaur census has yet been conducted in the region, preparations are under way to carry out one in the near future. Notably, gaurs are a preferred prey for tigers. However, the absence of resident big cats in the area means the species faces minimal predatory pressure, allowing it to multiply relatively undisturbed. A few months ago, a transient tiger, believed to have entered from Maharashtra, killed and consumed two gaurs in an isolated incident.

Apart from Malati, gaur sightings have also been reported in Chandragiri and Ambajhari ranges of the Ghumusar division. Elsewhere in the state, gaur populations are found in the Mahanadi wildlife sanctu-

ary, Debrigarh sanctuary, and a few other forested areas.

When contacted, Divisional Forest Officer Himansu Sekhar Mohanty said that all necessary steps are being taken to ensure the protection of wildlife, particularly rare species. "Dedicated measures are being implemented for their safety," he stated.

In a related development, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Suresh Panth is on a five-day inspection tour of Ganjam, Kandhamal, and Boudh districts since Friday.

He reviewed various forestry operations under the Berhampur forest division and assessed works in the Ghumusar South and North divisions, including the Digapahandi range.





“Whatsoever has courage can give courage to others just as the flame of the candle can light up another.”

THE MOTHER

## ECI & Aadhaar

Many of the acts of omission and commission by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in the recent past have been under question for their perceived bias in favour of the ruling dispensation and against the Opposition. Its latest ongoing exercise of conducting Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar further strengthens the suspicion especially in the light of certain observations of the Supreme Court hearing petitions challenging the SIR. The most alarming is the revelation that the ECI appears to be arrogating to itself, in the name of electoral roll revision, the task of determining citizenship which is supposedly the exclusive preserve of the Union Home Ministry. However, handing over this critical power to that ministry also is a dangerous proposition. The Home Ministry tried to undertake the job under controversial circumstances through the infamous National Register of Citizens (NRC).

While allowing ECI to continue the SIR in Bihar, the two-judge Bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Joymalya Bagchi rightly flagged three key issues, one of which being EC’s power to check the citizenship of voters. The other two issues are the importance of due process and procedure to be followed during the revision and the timing of the revision itself. The Bench pertinently said, “This issue goes to the very root of democracy and the right to vote.” It acknowledged that the EC, as a constitutional body, has powers well beyond the Representation of People’s Act, 1951 (RPA), but at the same time made it amply clear that the process would be subject to judicial intervention. There is no room for confusion over the remit of the Ministry of Home Affairs to determine whether an individual is a citizen, as the SIR has sought to create. The Bench said “citizenship is an issue to be determined not by the Election Commission of India, but by the Ministry of Home Affairs,” when EC’s counsel defended the Commission’s decision to exclude Aadhaar as a valid document.

The EC argument that “the precondition for adult suffrage is citizenship” appears tortuous. The contention is fallacious since it is not empowered to find the answer to the question of one’s citizenship. The Bench drove home the point with the observation that had it been so, the SIR should have started much earlier. The ECI decision to disenfranchise the person who is already there on the electoral roll in 2025, would compel such an individual to appeal against it and the time-consuming exercise would deny him his right to vote in the ensuing election. The decision to begin the exercise only a couple of months before the Bihar election makes it all the more suspect, to say the least. Justice Dhulia’s comment is a slap in the face of the entire exercise: “If you ask for these documents immediately, even I will not be able to produce it now, look at the practicality, look at the timeline.”

The Supreme Court also, in its order, asked the EC to explain why Aadhaar, Electoral Photo Identity Card and ration card cannot be accepted as valid documents in the SIR process. This potentially increases the ambit of the 11-document list that has caused widespread panic and confusion on the ground.

The ECI has over the years earned international accolades for its commendable work in including millions of voters into electoral rolls widening the scope of democracy. The court has rightly observed that “the entire exercise of SIR is about identity only,” none of the 11 documents currently listed are “tell-tale ones for citizenship” and that they are all meant to prove identity. It also rightly went on to question why Aadhaar, which is “considered basic for getting other documents,” is excluded while documents prepared on the basis of Aadhaar, such as caste certificates, are accepted. This not only exposes the inherent inconsistency in the ECI’s position, but also the intent behind the exercise, which is primarily aimed at excluding as many Moslem and Yadav voters from the voter list so as Bihar elections swing in favour of the ruling BJP and its allies.

Also, the ECI’s objection to Aadhaar, prepared at the cost of hundreds of crores of rupees from the national exchequer, as merely proof of residence rather than citizenship betrays its failure to understand the practical realities of Bihar, as also the rest of the country. According to one set of data, while 87 per cent of Bihar’s population has an Aadhaar, only 45-50 per cent are matriculates and close to just 2 per cent have passports that form part of the 11 documents listed by the ECI.

The ECI has indeed not covered itself with glory by enforcing SIR. Its reputation as an autonomous, independent Constitutional body is at stake. It needs to be seen to rise above political manipulations and guarantee the participation of every citizen in exercising franchise instead of disenfranchising bona fide citizens.

Funny as it may sound, the idea of Aadhaar was born during the Congress government of UPA II. But as is usual with that party, it was not forcibly implemented. Then comes the Modi led BJP in 2014 and by 2017 Aadhaar was made absolutely the pivot for survival in India. The citizen was made to run and run to link everything, including the spiritual soul to Aadhaar. Commercial enterprises understood the benefits and demanded Aadhaar, that held all private data of citizens, for every little act. Again, as is usual in India, even the so-called impregnable Aadhaar has been twisted and groped by elements inimical to the ruling dispensation. Therefore, the ECI has been commanded to deny use of Aadhaar for right to vote. If this move by the ECI is successful then it is the death of Aadhaar.

### WISDOM CORNER

“The doctor sees all the weakness of mankind; the lawyer all the wickedness, the theologian all the stupidity.”

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

“In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God’s existence.”

ISAAC NEWTON

“Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.”

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1789:** Bastille stormed by Paris mob. On this day in 1789, a mob advanced on the Bastille in Paris, demanding the arms and munitions stored there, but, when the guards resisted, the crowd captured the prison, an act that symbolized the end of the ancien régime.
- **1958:** Abd al-Karim Qasim, a brigadier in the Iraqi Army staged a military coup in Iraq, overthrowing the Hashemite monarchy. The Iraqi King Faisal II, the Crown Prince Abd al-Ilah, and Prime Minister Nuri al-Said were assassinated during the coup. Qasim took over the position of Prime Minister, which he held until 1963. The coup also led to the dissolution of the Arab Federation of Jordan and Iraq.
- **1960:** British ethologist Jane Goodall first arrived at what became Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania; there she conducted her groundbreaking research on chimpanzees.



DK Giri

THE COUNTRIES IN GLOBAL SOUTH ARE DISUNITED DESPITE COMMON HISTORY AND DESTINY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited five countries en route to attend the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro. These visits broke many new grounds. The countries he visited – Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Brazil and Namibia - were all former colonies of Britain, Spain, Germany and Portugal. Significantly, in the current geopolitical scenario, whilst America and China are flexing their military and economic muscles to gain influence world over, these countries have tried to remain independent of the power blocs.

Strategically, Modi may be offering a third way by inviting these countries to ‘grow together’ as partners and seek ‘security through solidarity’. He said that the power and value of a country do not manifest only through military mind or market size but in promoting inclusivity, cooperation and trust. The reference is obvious, that is, to America and China. There is hardly any debate on India’s commitment to the Global South. Modi’s visit to these countries heavily reflected this. He himself asserted that India has been concerned about the conditions of exploitation and discrimination of Global South. New Delhi sought to create an equal world where Global South has a voice and space. Modi promised to give a ‘new form’ to BRICS under its leadership that is passed on from the current Chair, Brazil. Will he succeed in transforming BRICS as he did to G20? Remember, BRICS is largely controlled by Sino-Russian axis.

In the absence of Chinese and Russian Presidents, there was quite a bit of coherence evident in the deliberations and statements that came out of the Rio Summit. The members were unanimous in their reference to the wars in Gaza and Iran. The Indian delegation even managed to insert a paragraph on Pahal-gam condemning the act of ter-



It is perfectly in order to promote economic diplomacy and build trade partnership. But, at the end of the day, the world order is defined by power, in its multiple dimensions

rorism. This was not possible in the recent SCO Conference. Yet, substantially restructuring BRICS is a tall order.

Modi’s first stop was Port of Spain, capital of Trinidad & Tobago. This was after the last visit of an Indian Prime Minister in 1999. Indian labourers were taken to that country way back from 1845. The current President Christine Carla Kan-galoo and the Prime Minister Kamla-Prasad Bissessar owe their ancestry to India. Modi, as usual, addressed the Indian Diaspora and said the story of the Diaspora is no longer that of struggles and suffering but now consists of success and value. An important MoU was signed on Indian Pharmacopia, meant to facilitate supply of generic medicines from India.

The next stop was Ghana. Modi’s visit was first by an Indian Prime Minister in 30 years. Ghana is a strategic partner for India in West Africa as it is a member of African Union and ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States comprising 15 countries. Four MoUs were signed during the visit in the areas of traditional medicine and Ayurveda, BIS – Bureau of Indian Standards and a Ghana counterpart for trade investment, a cultural exchange (2025-29) and a Joint Commission for Regular Interaction between officials of both countries. Gha-

na was one of the first countries to use UPI payments. New Delhi offers to develop Ghana as a vaccine hub of Africa.

India would focus on Ghana to reduce China’s dominance in Africa. New Delhi has the second largest number of projects in Ghana (11), and Indian companies have invested up to \$2bn in 818 projects. Ghana has been active in international politics along with India from the days of Kwame Nkrumah and Jawahar Lal Nehru.

In Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, the third stop in Modi’s itinerary, he was received by President Javier Milei. The discussions focused on common themes of his entire visit – pharmaceuticals, vaccines, digital technology, food security and critical minerals. Argentina is rich in shale gas and oil. Both countries agreed on critical minerals as India offered pharmaceuticals.

Modi then flew from Argentina to Rio (Brazil) for the BRICS Summit, the highlights of which have been mentioned here earlier. After the Summit, Modi made an official visit to the country. He was met by his counterpart, the formidable Left leader, President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, popularly known as Lula. Modi acknowledged the contribution of Lula as the chief architect of India-Brazil strategic partnership.

ship. Both leaders agreed that India-Brazil cooperation is an important pillar of the world. Both countries are members of BRICS and IBSA. Six agreements were inked which covered renewable energy, terrorism, intellectual property, agriculture, protection of classified information and defence (on mutual trust).

The last part of call was Namibia. This was first for Prime Minister Modi and third ever by an Indian Prime Minister. Namibian President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah conferred Modi with the highest civilian award of her country. India has stood by Namibia’s struggle for liberation. Its forerunner South West African Peoples Organisation had diplomatic contact with India in 1986. India was one of the first countries to recognise Namibia as it got independence in 1990. Several MoUs were signed with Namibia including the Global Bi-fuel Alliance. Namibia also accepted to launch UPI digital payments.

All in all, this long trip of five countries was an exercise essentially in economic diplomacy. Modi said profoundly that relationship should be built through technology, trade and trust. In this tour, Modi articulated alternative economic mechanisms to the developed world of Global North. It is perfectly in order to promote economic diplomacy and build trade partnership. But, at the end of the day, the world order is defined by power, in its multiple dimensions. The countries in Global South are disunited despite common history and destiny. The big question is how to execute their aspiration in the current geopolitical complexity. Admittedly, economic diplomacy can be independent of other variables in global politics. However, this is doable and desirable as long as it lasts.

The writer is Professor of Practice, NIIS Group of Institutions. ©INFA

### SPECTRUM AMERICA

## Abandoning the founding principles

In late June and early July 1776, the Second Continental Congress framed, debated, and adopted the Declaration of Independence. The document announced the creation of a new American republic and established its defining principles: a commitment to free trade, free immigration, and internationalism.

The determination of President Donald Trump’s administration to abandon these founding principles has become starkly apparent. By doing so, they risk surrendering the key to America’s prosperity and geopolitical influence at a moment when the world has never appeared so unstable.

The Committee of Five – John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman – who drafted the Declaration of Independence condemned King George III for “cutting off our trade with all parts of the world.” Since George III’s accession in 1760, the British imperial government had erected tariffs and non-tariff barriers on American trade with the French and Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and South America, depriving Americans of a vital outlet for their products and access to hard currency.

This led Jefferson, in 1774, to implore Britain not “to exclude us from going to other markets.” The following year, Franklin called on the monarchy “to give us the same privileges of trade as Scotland received at the union [of 1707], and allow us a free commerce with all the rest of the world.” The Declaration echoed these sentiments: free trade was a central tenet of America’s founding document, albeit accompanied by state support for the development of new industries.

The authors of the Declaration also condemned George III for his misguided restrictions on immigration. Well-designed states, America’s founders believed, should promote the movement of people. They denounced George III for endeavoring to “prevent the population of these states” and reversing generations of imperial policy by “refusing to pass” laws “to encourage ... migrations hither.”

By contrast, American patriots welcomed immigrants, who brought new skills to enhance production and immediately proved to be good consumers. “New settlers in America,” Franklin maintained, cleared farms and established villages and towns, creating “a growing demand for our merchandise,

to the greater employment of our manufacturers.”

America’s founders declared their independence from Britain not because they wanted to turn their backs on Europe, but because, as the opening sentence of the Declaration says, they wanted to situate themselves “among the powers of the earth.”

America’s founders sought internationalism, not isolation – a goal that many of their successors shared. On 4 July, 1821, President John Quincy Adams – the son of one of the Declaration’s framers – reflected on the importance of America’s founding document when he claimed that its goal was “to form connections of friendship and of commerce with foreign nations.” Adams concluded that “never, never for a moment have the great principles, consecrated by the Declaration of this day, been renounced or abandoned.”

President Abraham Lincoln reinforced the view that the Declaration, more than any other founding document, outlines the principles of American government. In his first inaugural address on 4 March, 1861, Lincoln declared that the US government was “much older than the Constitution.” Later, on 4 July, 1864, Lincoln endorsed the free movement of

people by signing into law the Act to Encourage Immigration.

No one truly committed to the original meaning of America’s constitutional document can abandon the principles of free trade, free immigration, or internationalism, as framed by Franklin and Jefferson, embraced by Adams and Lincoln, and presumably celebrated each year on the Fourth of July. But recent developments suggest that today’s political leaders are doing just that.

The Trump administration’s flurry of tariffs and trade barriers, terrorization and deportation of immigrants, and increasing isolationism are more reminiscent of George III’s policies than of those defended by America’s founders. Over the past 249 years, the US was arguably at its greatest when it fervently pursued its founding mission to guarantee the free flow of people and goods, and to build international alliances opposed to tyrannical and autocratic governments. As the country approaches its semiquincentennial, one fears that it is also approaching its nadir.

The writer is Professor of History at the University of Chicago. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Steve Pincus

OVER THE PAST 249 YEARS, THE US WAS ARGUABLY AT ITS GREATEST WHEN IT FERVENTLY PURSUED ITS FOUNDING MISSION TO GUARANTEE THE FREE FLOW OF PEOPLE AND GOODS

## Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate,  
Bhubaneswar-751010

### Convenient closure

Sir, This refers to “Blame it on pilot,” **Orissa POST**, Jul 13. The leaked preliminary report by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AIIB) regarding the recent Air India flight AI 171 crash in Ahmedabad has triggered a spectrum of reactions from the airline, aircraft manufacturer, and a key pilots’ association. While each party attempts to defend its position, the needle of suspicion appears to point towards pilot error. This is deeply unfortunate, as no pilot survives a fatal crash to defend their actions or provide critical explanations. It is imperative to remember that pilots are the last line of safety and deserve fair assessment, not blame. A crucial question arises—if the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had issued a safety bulletin in 2018 regarding potential faults in the fuel control switch locking mechanisms in certain Boeing aircraft, what preventive steps were taken by Air India? Ignoring such advisories can lead to tragic consequences. In the aftermath of any disaster, what matters most is an honest, transparent investigation—not scapegoating. Only by uncovering the full chain of causality can meaningful safety reforms be implemented. The goal must be prevention of future catastrophes, not convenient closure through blame.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### Nip it in the bud

Sir, At a time when the Election Commission of India (ECI) is alleged to have become subservient to the ruling dispensation, it is not a surprise that former Chief Justices JS Khehar and DY Chandrachud have expressed serious concerns about the bill on simultaneous elections (ONOE) and have questioned the legislation’s entrusting of unbridled powers to ECI. In a meeting of the JPC on ONOE, they have come heavily on various clauses that the panel members went over. The bill if passed without making suitable amendments to various clauses found in the present recommendations of a committee headed by former President Ram-nath Kovind will cause heavy damage to the democratic fabric of our nation and pave the way for a presidential, read dictatorial form of government.

Tharcus S. Fernando, CHENNAI



# Jharkhand's pearl farming revolution

The focus on freshwater pearl cultivation in Jharkhand leverages the state's natural water resources while providing a sustainable livelihood option that can be scaled from small backyard operations to larger commercial ventures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, July 13:** Jharkhand is rapidly emerging as India's freshwater pearl farming hub, with the state government and Centre implementing comprehensive training programmes and infrastructure development to transform this niche sector into a major livelihood opportunity for rural youth and farmers.

The transformation gained momentum when the Centre notified development of Hazaribagh as the first pearl farming cluster with ₹22 crore investment under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in collaboration with the Jharkhand government.

What started as a pilot project in 2019-20 under the state plan has now evolved into a structured ecosystem focusing on skill development, with specialised training centres established across the state to teach farmers the intricate art of pearl cultivation.

## Training takes root

The Purty Agrotech Training Centre, established in Ranchi in 2024 using corporate CSR funds, has emerged as the nerve centre of this training revolution. The facility has already trained over 132 farmers from across the state in advanced pearl culture techniques, with these trained farmers now cascading their knowledge to others in their respective districts, creating a multiplier effect.

"Training is the backbone of successful pearl farming. We are focusing on round pearl



Farmers turning mussels into gold with 10x returns  
Hazaribagh is set to be the first pearl farming cluster

culture as it fetches more returns compared to designer pearls," said Budhan Singh Purty, a mechanical engineer from NIT Jamshedpur who runs the training centre and has become one of the state's few surgical experts in round pearl cultivation.

The training programmes emphasise skilled surgical grafting techniques, use of specialised instruments, and careful post-surgical management -- critical factors that determine survival rates and quality of pearl production. This focus on technical expertise is crucial since culturing round pearls demands precision to ensure high survival rates and quality production.

Recognising the sector's potential, St Xavier's College, Ranchi, has introduced certificate courses in pearl farming ranging from six months

to one-and-a-half years, integrating academic research with practical field experience.

"Pearl farming is going to be a rising sector in Jharkhand and provide job opportunities to youth. The knowledge of science along with field experience will help develop enterprising skills," Professor Ritesh Kumar Shukla told PTI.

## Compelling economics drive adoption

The state's emergence as a pearl farming hub is driven by compelling economics -- round pearls can be cultivated in backyard settings using cement tanks, buckets, or fish tanks, and yield profits of more than ten times the investment. The cultivation can be done in small spaces, making it accessible to small farmers and youth seeking

alternative livelihoods. The economics are straightforward: it costs ₹35-50 to nurture one mussel for three years until it produces a pearl, which then sells for up to ₹1,000, depending on quality. This means farmers can expect significant returns on relatively modest investments.

## Success story: From engineer to pearl entrepreneur

Budhan Singh Purty's journey exemplifies the sector's potential. The 46-year-old engineer has scaled up from 5,000 mussels in 2014 to 1.7 lakh mussels currently. With an investment of ₹6.5 lakh, he expects to earn ₹32 lakh from his upcoming harvest.

"I started pearl farming with 5,000 mussels in a pond in naxal-affected West Singhbhum. Now more farmers are encouraged to take up pearl farming, helping them come back to the mainstream," Purty said.

Using his engineering background, Purty has developed indigenous surgical tools costing ₹3,600 to manufacture, compared to imported alternatives that cost up to ₹25,000. "As pearl farming expands in the state, there will be huge demand for surgical tools. There is scope to set up a unit to manufacture surgical tools," he said.

Purty has established supply chains with TRIFED, Tata Big-Basket, IndiaMART, and also supplies to Surat for export purposes, demonstrating the market potential for Jharkhand's

pearl production.

## Government support and future plans

State Fisheries Department Director HN Dwivedi emphasised the huge potential to promote natural pearl farming as a cottage industry in Jharkhand, providing employment to youth. "Currently, NABCONS (NABARD Consultancy Services) is conducting gap analysis and soon the action plan to develop Hazaribagh cluster will be ready," Dwivedi said.

The state has also proposed setting up a brood bank of Vietnamese mussel species Hyriopsis cumingii and sought funds from the Centre under PMMSY.

The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) has reported that 1.02 lakh pearls were produced from Hazaribagh district alone, indicating the sector's growing scale.

## Science behind pearl production

Mussels, bivalve molluscs found in both freshwater and marine environments, play a central role in freshwater pearl production as living hosts that secrete nacre to form pearls over a three-year period. The process requires careful management and monitoring to ensure optimal conditions for pearl formation.

As this sector continues to expand, Jharkhand is positioning itself not just as a production hub but as a centre of excellence for pearl farming training and technology development, potentially transforming the economic landscape for rural communities across the state.

## POWER CUTS NO MORE

# Hosp turns to sun for energy



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bundi, July 13:** In a significant move towards sustainable energy and self-reliance, the Health Department in Bundi, Rajasthan, has taken a major step by adopting solar power under the government's initiative to promote renewable energy across public departments.

In what is beneficial to the patients and staff a lot, a solar panel system of 4.5 kilowatts has been installed at the Bundi District General Hospital. This is aimed at reducing electricity consumption and significantly cutting down monthly electricity bills.

This significant move has come at a time when the hospital has been reeling under power outages for a long time. The outages have been causing operational disruptions in the hospital.

With the new solar power setup, the hospital is expected to enjoy uninterrupted power supply, ensuring a smoother experience for both patients and healthcare staff, say officials.

Lakshmi Narayan Meena, the in-charge of the General Hospital, expressed his satisfaction with the initiative. Talking to IANS, Meena said, "This solar panel will truly help us overcome the challenges

caused by frequent power cuts, and it will also ease the burden of high electricity bills. All departments should adopt this system."

He further added that such steps by the state government would serve as a milestone for administrative offices and public institutions. One of the key benefits of this solar system is its capacity to generate surplus electricity. If the hospital produces more electricity than required, the excess power can be sold back to the electricity distribution company (DISCOM).

This would provide an additional source of income for the department, which can be utilised for minor operational expenses, offering further financial relief. He said that the surplus power can be given to the government, which can also benefit from it.

"There is no fault and other related issues in the supply of the power generated through solar panels, which is normally felt in a non-solar power system," he added.

He lauded this initiative, saying that there are lots of benefits from this. This transition to solar energy marks a significant step toward making the Bundi Health Department more self-reliant and environmentally responsible.

## CROP LOANS

# Over ₹42,131cr given to farmers in Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, July 13:** The Rajasthan government has disbursed over ₹42,131 crore in interest-free short-term crop loans to more than 75 lakh farmers since the formation of the new government.

The cooperative department has also expanded its network, setting up over 600 new cooperative societies across the state by June 30, 2025, an official statement said Saturday.

The state budget for 2025-26 includes a provision to distribute ₹25,000 crore in interest-free loans to another 35 lakh farmers.

The other initiatives include medium and long-term credit distribution, construction of 212 new warehouses the launch of dairy-focused interest-free loan schemes and a one-time interest relief programme for cooperative bank borrowers.

# Tree plantation targets raise concerns in schools

Buried in plantation targets, school teachers in Rajasthan say govt ordered drive 'impractical'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jodhpur, July 13:** Schools in Rajasthan face an unlikely challenge at the beginning of the new session: teachers and students are both tasked with ensuring that they meet daily and ultimately monthly targets of an aggressive government-ordered plantation drive.

Under the Hariyal Rajasthan - Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam Mission, the state's education minister, Madan Dilawar, has directed the planting of 25 crore saplings between July 10 and August 10.

According to the order, every student up to upper primary classes has to plant 10 saplings per day, while students in the primary level have a target of 15 plants per day, and teachers have to plant 15 saplings per day.

"Does it sound practical by any means?" asked a principal of a senior secondary school in Jodhpur's suburban area.

"Plantation is the need of our time, but such a daunting target and pressure to achieve it does not make any sense and affects the routine work," she said, adding that most schools do not have a place for plantation at all. This affects routine school work and affects admissions, given that it is harder to convince parents to send their children to school.

Besides, the schools have to upload the entire activity, from digging to planting the sapling, on an app provided to the teachers, according to the order.

Teachers are also concerned about finding a spot to dig a pit, arranging the plants, and then ensuring that the plants survive,

all without dedicated financial provision. The availability of plants in such large numbers in government nurseries is also an area of concern.

A teacher from a senior secondary school in the city also questioned the order's "practicality", and asked where schools in urban areas will find enough places for such a plantation drive.

Media in-charge of Rajasthan Shikshak Sangh (Ajmer Division), Kalu Ram, asked whether the teachers are supposed to run the school and teach or be seen running around digging pits and planting trees. "Many important aspects have been overlooked in this drive, and in the absence of judicious planning, this entire exercise will miserably fall short of purpose," he added.

He further expressed concern that school staff will struggle to convince parents, many of whom are already disinterested in sending their children to government schools.

Environmentalist and plantation crusader Ram Niwas Budhnagar attributed the order to an attempt at self-praise and said the order was a "mockery" of environmental concern and "exploitation" of teachers. Environmentalist and plantation crusader Ram Niwas Budhnagar attributed the order to an attempt at self-praise.

"This order is absolutely impractical and arbitrary, which would derail the school's routine function at this time," he said.

Budhnagar said the government could instead have chosen those who were already engaged in plantation work, given their expertise and access to resources.

Under the central government's Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam campaign, people plant trees in the name of their mothers -- a symbolic gesture to honour their role in nurturing life while addressing the need for environmental preservation.



A collapsed portion of a bridge over the Banai river at Torpa, in Khunti district, Jharkhand, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

# Jharkhand to take notes from Bihar for its first tiger safari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, July 13:** The Jharkhand government has decided to adopt Bihar's Rajgir model for setting up its first tiger safari in Palamau to boost tourism in the area once affected by Maoists, an official said.

The Palamau Tiger Reserve (PTR) now has five big cats.

"It has been decided to adopt the Rajgir model to develop a tiger safari in the Palamau Tiger Reserve. After the proposal gets approval from the state board of wildlife, it will be sent to the Central Zoo Authority for its nod," the official said.

PTR Deputy Director Prajesh Jena said at least 150 hectare of land is required for the tiger safari.

Jena said they chose Rajgir Safari as it is one of the first successful models in the country.

"They added features, such as a glass bridge, which have boosted its tourism and provided a sustainable economic growth model for the area. We want to adopt that model," Jena said.

The proposal was discussed

## 'RAJGIR MODEL'



during a meeting, chaired by Jharkhand Tourism Minister Sudviya Kumar, in the presence of Finance Minister Radha Krishna Kishore, and senior officials of the two departments here Saturday.

The cost of the project has been estimated at around ₹250 crore, it stated.

Kumar said, "This people's

government is committed to establishing Palamu and other tourist destinations in Jharkhand on the national and international map, with continuous efforts being made in this direction."

The PTR is spread over 1,129 sq km, of which 414.08 sq km is marked as the core area (critical tiger habitat), and the

remaining 715.85 sq km is the buffer zone. In the buffer zone, 53 sq km is open for tourists.

"We have identified land for the purpose at Putuagarh area in the reserve. The safari will be established following all norms," Jena said.

The region has been Naxal-affected for many years and backward, where hardly any

The tiger safari will help boost the overall economy of the area through tourism, and it will also generate local employment. It is not just a zoo safari for entertainment but an economic development plan

PRAJESH JENA | DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PTR

employment opportunities existed, he said.

The state government has also decided to restore the 400-year-old Palamu fort and prepare a separate proposal for the beautification of Kamalidih Lake near Palamu to further enrich the overall tourism development of the area.

Kumar, who is also the minister of state for art, culture and sports, also met former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni Saturday and discussed the development of sports and tourism in the state. Dhoni's experience can provide a new direction and heights to sports and tourism in the state, he said. "The state government is confident about Dhoni ji's cooperation," he added.










Mr Rahul Gandhi doesn't always go into details. He will just give a reaction based on some feedback that his advisers give him. He doesn't go personally into details. Actually, post Covid, especially if I can say, employment rate has increased like anything, EPFO numbers itself show that



PRALHAD JOSHI | UNION MINISTER

In line with the prime minister's wish, we are going to set up a replica of 51 Shakti Peethas at Bandowar to attract millions of tourists from around the world



MANIK SAHA | TRIPURA CM

We are not just grooming youth on talent platforms but preparing them for leadership, innovation, and enterprise



PEMA KHANDU | ARUNACHAL CM

SHORT TAKES

Cong to hold strategy meet tomorrow

**New Delhi:** Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi has convened a meeting of top party leaders July 15 to finalise strategy for the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament, which is expected to be stormy with the Opposition raring to raise several issues like EC's special intensive revision in Bihar and Operation Sindoor. Sources said the Parliamentary strategy group meeting would be attended by the Leaders of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, besides the deputy leaders in both houses and the chief whips and whips of the party.

Himachal: 3 tourists rescued from jungle

**Shimla:** Three tourists from Punjab and a local resident were rescued from a dense forest in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi during a joint late-night operation conducted by Mandi Police and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), officials said Sunday. According to reports, the incident occurred Saturday night when the tourists and the local resident from Dharampur set out on foot along a narrow trail after the main road was blocked. While following a group of local residents, the four strayed off the path and were soon left behind, eventually getting lost in the thick forest.

Vijay slams DMK

**Chennai:** Founder-chief of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, actor-politician Vijay Sunday slammed the DMK regime over “custodial deaths” and alleged the “empty, publicity-model DMK sarkar has now got transformed into a sorry model sarkar.” Addressing TVK's protest rally here, seeking justice for the death of alleged custodial torture victim Ajith Kumar of Sivaganga district, Vijay said the victim hailed from an ordinary family and Chief Minister M K Stalin apologised to the Kumar's family and it is appropriate. This is the first time Vijay has led a protest demonstration and TVK cadres from several parts of the state gathered.

Painter's body found

**Lucknow:** The body of a 45-year-old man, who went missing after he fell into a drain along a waterlogged road in Lucknow, was recovered Sunday morning, a local corporator said. Suresh Lodhi, who worked as a painter, had allegedly slipped into a drain in Mallahi Tola-1 ward during incessant rains Saturday morning. The old drain is said to have been broken at some portions, which were concealed by waterlogging in the area.

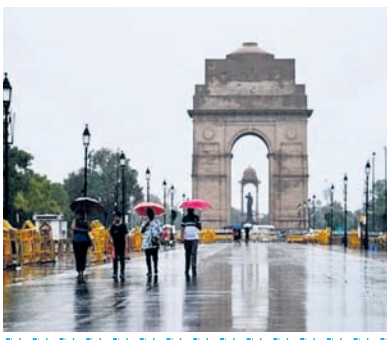


We have made a rule that if licences for liquor shops in the state are to be granted, it should not be done without taking the legislature into confidence

AJIT PAWAR | MAHA DY CM

RAIN LASHES DELHI, IMD ISSUES RED ALERT

Parts of the city were lashed by rain Sunday evening, bringing relief from the humid weather. The weather department has issued a red alert for more showers over the next few hours and throughout Monday



Ex-FS Shringla, lawyer Nikam among four nominated to RS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 13:** Former foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Special Public Prosecutor in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks case Ujjwal Nikam, Kerala BJP leader C Sadanandan Master and Delhi-based historian Meenakshi Jain have been nominated to the Rajya Sabha. In a notification issued late Saturday night, the Union Home Ministry said the President has nominated the four to the Rajya Sabha.

“In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-clause (a) of clause (1) of article 80 of the Constitution of India, read with clause (3) of that article, the President is pleased to nominate to the Council of States the following persons to fill the vacancies caused due to retirement of nominated members:- Shri Ujjwal Deorao Nikam, Shri C Sadanandan Master, Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Dr Meenakshi Jain,” the notification said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the nominations. Lauding Nikam's devotion to the legal field and to the Constitution as “exemplary”, the Prime Minister said he has not only been a success-

ful lawyer but also been at the forefront of seeking justice in important cases.

“During his entire legal career, he has always worked to strengthen Constitutional values and ensure common citizens are always treated with dignity. It's gladdening that the President of India has nominated him to the Rajya Sabha. My best wishes for his Parliamentary innings,” Modi said on X. Nikam is a renowned lawyer and had served as a government counsel in the Mumbai terror attacks case.

The BJP had fielded him as party candidate for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from the Mumbai North Central seat. Lauding Shringla's work as a diplomat, the prime minister said his unique perspectives will greatly enrich Parliamentary proceedings.

“Over the years, he's made key contributions to India's foreign policy and also contributed to our G20 Presidency. Glad that he's been nominated to the Rajya Sabha by President of India. His unique perspectives will greatly enrich Parliamentary proceedings,” Modi said. Shringla had served as India's Ambassador to the United States and Thailand and as high commissioner to Bangladesh.

Sibal slams EC, calls it Modi's ‘puppet’



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 13:** The Election Commission has always been a “puppet” in the hands of the Modi government, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal has alleged and claimed the poll body's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar is an “unconstitutional” move aimed at ensuring that majoritarian governments remain in power.

In an interview with PTI, Sibal also alleged that each election commissioner surpasses the previous one in his “alignment to this government”. Hitting out at the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, the former law minister said the Election Commission (EC) doesn't have the jurisdiction to decide issues of citizenship.

The EC has all along maintained that the revision, being held after 22 years, will cleanse the voters' list of ineligible people, duplicate entries and include those eligible as per law to vote.

Asked about the Opposition's attack on the EC over SIR, Sibal said, “It has always been a puppet in the hands of the government for a long long time ever since this government came to power.”

The conduct of the Election Commission, the less said about it, the better, he said. “In fact, each election commissioner surpasses the previous one in

his alignment to this government,” Sibal said.

On the ongoing SIR, he said, “This is according to me a completely unconstitutional process that is being carried on. The Commission doesn't have the jurisdiction to decide issues of citizenship and that also by a block level officer.”

“I have been saying that they (BJP) adopt all possible means to somehow win elections. In fact, this whole particular process of a special intensive revision is a process to ensure majoritarian governments for all times to come,” the senior advocate said.

“This is the intent because if you delete the names of poor people, the marginalised, the adivasis, you will ensure that the majoritarian party always wins. So this is yet another way of ensuring that and this is very worrisome,” he said in a statement.

Sibal said he has always stated that he doesn't believe in the independence of the EC at all because the institution has not reflected that independence that was expected of them.

On the Supreme Court's interim order, Sibal refused to comment on it, pointing out that he is a counsel in the matter.

“Whatever the court has said will be taken into account hopefully by the EC itself. So that we don't have this controversy moving forward,” he said.

SIT formed to probe IIM-Calcutta ‘rape’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, July 13:** Police have constituted a nine-member special investigation team (SIT) to probe into the alleged rape of a woman by a student at the Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta, officials said Saturday.

The team is led by an assistant commissioner from the South West Division, they said. The alleged incident took place inside the boys' hostel of IIM-Calcutta Friday, a police officer had said.

The accused student was arrested Saturday on the basis of an FIR lodged by the woman, he said. A court here has remanded the student to police custody till July 19. Key focus areas of the investigation include securing digital and forensic evidence, the officials said.

Forensic teams have already visited the spot and collected samples, including food remains and other items, for laboratory examination, they said.

CCTV camera footage of the entire campus has also been sought from the IIM authorities as part of the probe, they said.

The woman's father, however, has claimed that the reported incident did not take place. “I received a call from my daughter around 9.40 pm Friday. She told me she had fallen from a vehicle, lost consciousness and suffered injuries. Later, I came to know she was admitted to SSKM Hospital. Nothing of the sort that the police are claiming happened, based on the details I received from my daughter,” he had told reporters Saturday.

Internet, SMS services suspended in Nuh for 24 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gurugram, July 13:** Authorities have imposed multiple restrictions and heightened security in Haryana's Nuh district to ensure the peaceful conduct of the Brij Mandal Jalabhishek Yatra scheduled for Monday, officials said.

District Magistrate Vishram Kumar Meena Sunday issued an order under Section 163 of the Indian Civil Security Code, 2023, banning the carrying of all weapons, including licensed arms, firearms, swords, sticks, tridents, rods, knives and chains. Only the sheathed kirpan, worn as a religious symbol by members of the Sikh community, has been exempted. The use of DJs, loudspeakers or sound-amplifying devices with content that is religiously provocative or hurts the sentiments of any community will also be strictly prohibited during the yatra, the order read.



Visitors at Chitrakote Waterfalls during monsoon season, in Bastar district, Chhattisgarh

PTI PHOTO

Farewells aboard ISS as Shuks, crew end 18-day mission

*The Axiom 4 (Ax-4) crew—Commander Peggy Whitson, Pilot Shubhanshu “Shux” Shukla, and Mission Specialists Slawosz “Suave” Uznanski-Wisniewski and Tibor Kapu—are nearing the completion of their research and preparing to undock no earlier than at 7:05 am ET (4:35 pm IST) Monday*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 13:** After 18 days of intense science experiments at the International Space Station, it is time for farewells and feasts for Shubhanshu Shukla and three other astronauts of the Axiom-4 mission who are set to begin their return journey to Earth Monday.

The Axiom 4 (Ax-4) crew—Commander Peggy Whitson, Pilot Shubhanshu “Shux” Shukla, and Mission Specialists Slawosz “Suave” Uznanski-Wisniewski and Tibor Ka-

pu—are nearing the completion of their research and preparing to undock no earlier than at 7:05 am ET (4:35 pm IST) Monday.

“Arrival back to earth.... splash down scheduled for 15th July at 3:00 PM IST,” Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said in a post on X. A formal farewell for the Axiom-4 crew is scheduled for Sunday evening, India time. As the Axiom-4 mission drew to a close, astronauts on board the ISS gathered for a feast with a diverse menu from the six nations they represent.



Currently, there are 11 astronauts on the ISS, seven of Expedition 73 and four of the Axiom-4 commercial mission. “One of the most unforgettable evenings I've experienced on this mission was sharing a meal with new friends, Ax-4, aboard the International @Space.Station,” US astronaut Jonny Kim said in a post on X last week. “We

swapped stories and marvelled at how people from diverse backgrounds and nations came together to represent humanity in space,” he said.

For appetisers, the astronauts made rehydrated shrimp cocktails and crackers and the main course featured savoury chicken and beef fajitas. The cosmonauts capped the night

with a delicious cake made from sweet bread, condensed milk, and walnuts, Kim said.

Shukla had got aam ras and carrot halwa for the feast, while Polish astronaut Slawosz had brought his native dish, pierogi with cabbage and mushrooms, to the ISS.

It has been a historic trip for Shukla, who became the first Indian to travel to the ISS and only the second to travel to space after Rakesh Sharma's pathbreaking spaceflight as part of the then Soviet Russia's mission to Salyut-7 space station in 1984.

So far, Shukla has spent 18 days in space, witnessing 16 sunrises and sunsets every day as the ISS travels at a speed of 28,000 km per hour in an orbit about 400 km above the Earth.

According to ISRO, post splashdown, Shukla will undergo a rehabilitation programme

(about 7 days) under the supervision of a flight surgeon to adapt back to Earth's gravity.

ISRO paid approximately Rs 550 crore for Shukla's travel to the ISS, an experience that will help the space agency in the planning and execution of its human spaceflight programme, Gaganyaan, set to take to orbit in 2027.

Shukla and the three other astronauts are expected to board the spacecraft at 2.25 pm IST, wear their space suits and carry out the necessary tests before they begin their journey to the Earth.

The ISS is orbiting the Earth at a speed of 28,000 km per hour, and the Dragon spacecraft will initiate the autonomous undocking process to gradually slow down and re-enter the planet's atmosphere for a splashdown off the coast of California.



# international

## of the day quote

We deal with each other in a calm and consistent manner, and we want to continue to pursue our national interests, and it is in our interest to have good relations with China.

ANTHONY ALBANESE | AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

It is more than ever up to the commission to assert the union's determination to defend European interests resolutely

EMMANUEL MACRON | FRENCH PRESIDENT

The EU now must, in the time that remains, negotiate in a pragmatic manner a solution with the United States

KATHERINA REICHE | GERMANY'S ECONOMY MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Pak troupe stages Ramayana version

**Karachi:** A Pakistani drama group is making waves by staging an adaptation of the “Ramayana”, a powerful legend of good versus evil deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, in Karachi city of Pakistan’s Sindh province. Drama group “Maui”, staging the “Ramayana” at the Karachi Arts Council over the weekend, has won appreciation for their efforts to bring the epic to life by using AI enhancements. Director Yoheshwar Karera said he never felt that staging the “Ramayana” would lead to people disliking him or facing any threats. “To me, bringing the Ramayana to life on stage is a visual treat and shows the Pakistani society is more tolerant than it is often given credit for,” he said. Karera said the drama had been well received, with many critics appreciating the efforts put into the production and the actors' performance. Producer Rana Kazmi, who plays the part of Sita, said she was intrigued by the idea of bringing the ancient tale as a living, breathing experience for audiences.

### 7 held for B'desh trader's lynching

**Dhaka:** At least seven people have been arrested so far, and a nationwide combing operation was launched in Bangladesh Sunday in connection with the killing of a scrap trader here, Home Affairs Adviser Lieutenant General (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said. Chowdhury said the operation was launched to maintain law and order and ensure pre-election stability following the gruesome murder of Lal Chand alias Sohag near Mitford Hospital on July 9, Prothom Alo reported. “The murder that took place in Mitford, the capital, is extremely tragic and barbaric. Such incidents have no place in a civilised society,” he said, adding that the Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested two more accused in the case Saturday night. He said the intelligence agencies were working tirelessly to arrest the other accused and that none would be spared, irrespective of their political identity. “The government believes criminals are criminals. No criminal will be spared regardless of their political affiliation. No criminal will get shelter,” he said. Chowdhury said steps had been taken to shift the Mitford murder case to the Speedy Trial Tribunal.

## 30 killed in Israeli strikes as Gaza war toll tops 58K

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Deir al-Balah, July 13:** Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip killed at least 30 people on Sunday, including six children at a water collection point, local health officials said, despite attempts by mediators to bring about a ceasefire. Israel and Hamas appeared no closer to a breakthrough in talks meant to pause the 21-month war and free some Israeli hostages. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was in Washington last week to discuss the deal with the Trump administration, but a new sticking point has emerged over the deployment of Israeli troops during the truce, raising questions over the feasibility of a new deal.

Israel says it will only end the war once Hamas surrenders, disarms and goes into exile, something it refuses to do. Hamas says it is willing to free all the remaining 50 hostages, less than half said to be alive, in exchange for an end to the war and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces.

Gaza's Health Ministry said Sunday that more than 58,000 people have been killed in the



war. The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says more than half of the dead are women and children. In the Oct 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war, Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and abducted 251 in a raid on northern Israel.

Throughout the war in Gaza, violence has also surged in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where funerals were held Sunday for two Palestinians, in-



How we look at others is what counts, because it shows what is in our hearts

POPE LEO XIV

## SYRIA'S WILDFIRES UNDER CONTROL

Some of Syria's worst wildfires in years have been brought under control as of Sunday, according to the Civil Defence and the Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management, following days of gruelling firefighting in the forested countryside of the coastal Latakia province.



## ‘Beautiful’ or ‘Ugly,’ Trump’s bill shapes battle for midterms



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, July 13:** Debate over President Donald Trump's sweeping budget-and-policy package is over on Capitol Hill. Now the argument goes national.

From the Central Valley of California to Midwestern battlegrounds and suburban districts of the northeast, the new law already is shaping the 2026 midterm battle for control of the House of Representatives. The outcome will set the tone for Trump's final two years in the Oval Office.

Democrats need a net gain of three House seats to break the GOP's chokehold on Washington and reestablish a power centre to counter Trump. There's added pressure to flip the House given that midterm Senate contests are concentrated in Republican-leaning states, making it harder for Democrats to reclaim that chamber.

As Republicans see it, they've now delivered broad tax cuts, an unprecedented investment in immigration enforcement and new restraints on social safety net programmes.

Democrats see a law that rolls back health insurance access and raises costs for middle-class Americans while cutting taxes mostly for the rich, curtailing green energy initiatives and restricting some workers' organising rights.

“It represents the broken promise they made to the American people,” said Rep Suzan DelBene, a Washington Democrat who chairs the party's House campaign arm. “We're going to continue to hold Republicans accountable for this vote.”

Whether voters see it that way will be determined on a district-by-district level, but the battle will be more intense in some places than others. Among the 435 House districts, only 69 contests were decided by less than 10 percentage points in the 2024 general election.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has so far identified 26 Democratic-held seats it must defend vigorously, along with 34 GOP-held seats it believes could be ripe to flip. Republicans' campaign arm, the National Republican Congressional Committee, has so far listed 18 GOP incumbents as priorities, plus two districts

opened by retirements.

There are a historically low number of so-called crossover districts: Only 13 Democrats represent districts Trump carried in 2024, while just three Republicans serve districts Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris carried.

Both committees are busy recruiting challengers and open-seat candidates and more retirements could come, so the competitive map will evolve. Still, there are clusters of districts guaranteed to influence the national result.

California, despite its clear lean to Democrats statewide, has at least nine House districts expected to be up for grabs: three in the Central Valley and six in southern California. Six are held by Democrats, three by the GOP.

Pennsylvania features four districts that have been among the closest national House races for several consecutive cycles. They include a suburban Philadelphia seat represented by Rep Brian Fitzpatrick, one of just two House Republicans to vote against Trump's bill and one of the three GOP lawmakers from a district Harris won. Fitzpatrick cited the Medicaid cuts.

Iowa and Wisconsin, meanwhile, feature four contiguous GOP-held districts in farm-heavy regions where voters could be swayed by fallout from Trump's tariffs.

Beyond bumper-sticker labels – Trump's preferred “Big Beautiful Bill” versus Democrats' “Big Ugly Bill” retort – the 900-page law is, in fact, an array of policies with varying impact.

Democrats hammer Medicaid and food assistance cuts, some timed to take full effect only after the 2026 midterms, along with Republicans' refusal to extend tax credits to some people who obtained health insurance through the Affordable Care Act.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 11.8 million more Americans would become uninsured by 2034 if the bill became law; 3 million more would not qualify for food stamps, also known as SNAP benefits.

“Folks will die here in Louisiana and in other parts of the country,” House Minority Leader Jeffries warned last week during a town hall in Republican Speaker Mike Johnson's home state of Louisiana.



A chain carousel spins in the evening sky at the Rhine funfair in Duesseldorf, Germany

PTI PHOTO

## Small plane crashes at London airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, July 13:** Emergency services raced Sunday to the scene of a small plane crash at London Southend Airport.

No details on where the plane was heading or how many people were on board were immediately disclosed.

In a statement on social media, the airport confirmed a “serious incident” involving what it termed a general aviation aircraft.

Images posted on social media show a plume of fire and black smoke emanating from the crash site. The plane involved is said to be 12 metres

(39 feet) long.

Witness John Johnson, who was at the airport with his family, said he saw a “big fireball” after the plane “crashed head first into the ground.”

“It took off and about three or four seconds after taking off, it started to bank heavily to its left, and then within a few seconds of that happening, it more or less inverted and crashed just head-first into the ground,” he said. “There was a big fireball.” Johnson said that before the plane got into position for take-off, he and his family waved at the pilots and “they all waved back at us.”

After the crash, Johnson

said the airport's fire service responded straight away, with two fire engines sent to the crash site, followed by local police, ambulance and fire services.

Essex Police said it was alerted just before 4 pm local time to the “serious incident” at the relatively small airport, which is around 45 miles (72 kilometres) east of the capital.

“We are working with all emergency services at the scene now and that work will be ongoing for several hours,” Essex Police said. As a precaution due to their proximity to the incident, police evacuated a local golf club and rugby club.

## Hungary’s 1000-yr-old library fighting beetle infestation

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Pannonhalma, July 13:** Tens of thousands of centuries-old books are being pulled from the shelves of a medieval abbey in Hungary in an effort to save them from a beetle infestation that could wipe out centuries of history.

The 1,000-year-old Pannonhalma Archabbey is a sprawling Benedictine monastery that is one of Hungary's oldest centres of learning and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Restoration workers are removing about 100,000 hand-bound books from their shelves and carefully placing them in crates, the start of a disinfection process that aims to kill the tiny beetles burrowed into them.

The drugstore beetle, also known as the bread beetle, is often found among dried food-stuffs like grains, flour and spices. But they also are attracted to the gelatin and starch-based

adhesives found in books.

They have been found in a section of the library housing around a quarter of the abbey's 400,000 volumes.

“This is an advanced insect infestation which has been detected in several parts of the library, so the entire collection is classified as infected and must be treated all at the same time,” said Zsafia Edit Hajdu, the chief restorer on the project. “We’ve never encountered such a degree of infection before.”

The beetle invasion was first detected during a routine library cleaning. Employees noticed unusual layers of dust on the shelves and then saw that holes had been burrowed into some of the book spines. Upon opening the volumes, burrow holes could be seen in the paper where the beetles chewed through.

The abbey at Pannonhalma was founded in 996, four years before the establishment of the



Hungarian Kingdom. Sitting upon a tall hill in northwestern Hungary, the abbey houses the country's oldest collection of books, as well as many of its earliest and most important written records.

For over 1,000 years, the abbey has been among the most prominent religious and cul-

tural sites in Hungary and all of Central Europe, surviving centuries of wars and foreign incursions such as the Ottoman invasion and occupation of Hungary in the 16th century.

Ilona Ásványi, director of the Pannonhalma Archabbey library, said she is “humbled” by the historical and cultural

treasures the collection holds whenever she enters.

“It is dizzying to think that there was a library here a thousand years ago, and that we are the keepers of the first book catalogue in Hungary,” she said.

Among the library's most outstanding works are 19 codices, including a complete Bible from the 13th century. It also houses several hundred manuscripts predating the invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century and tens of thousands of books from the 16th century.

While the oldest and rarest prints and books are stored separately and have not been infected, Ásványi said any damage to the collection represents a blow to cultural, historical and religious heritage.

“When I see a book chewed up by a beetle or infected in any other way, I feel that no matter how many copies are published and how replaceable the book

is, a piece of culture has been lost,” she said.

To kill the beetles, the crates of books are being placed into tall, hermetically sealed plastic sacks from which all oxygen is removed. After six weeks in the pure nitrogen environment, the abbey hopes all the beetles will be destroyed.

Before being reshelfed, each book will be individually inspected and vacuumed. Any book damaged by the pests will be set aside for later restoration work. The abbey, which hopes to reopen the library at the beginning of next year, believes the effects of climate change played a role in spurring the beetle infestation as average temperatures rise rapidly in Hungary.

Hajdu, the chief restorer, said higher temperatures have allowed the beetles to undergo several more development cycles annually than they could in cooler weather.



of the day

quote

Looking ahead, the earnings season will be in full focus. On the macroeconomic front, participants will closely track the WPI and CPI inflation data scheduled for July 14 for further cues on the economy

AJIT MISHRA |  
SVP, RESEARCH, RELIGARE BROKING LTD

Major ports have achieved a draft of 14 metres, while ports like Kamarajar, Paradip and Deendayal are progressing towards 18-metre draft to accommodate large shipping vessels due to policy initiative taken by the government to make India a regional transshipment powerhouse

TK RAMACHANDRAN | SHIPPING SECRETARY

Gold is expected to trade strong in the coming week as long as it sustains above Rs 97,000 per 10 grams on the MCX

JATEEN TRIVEDI |  
VP RESEARCH ANALYST, LKP SECURITIES

SHORT TAKES

Costa Coffee's India sales jump

**New Delhi:** British coffee chain brand Costa Coffee's India revenue from operations surged 30.76 per cent to Rs 198.5 crore in FY25, and its profit rose 28.4 per cent to Rs 149.7 crore. The growth was driven by store expansion, as the number of outlets increased from 179 to 220 in FY25, according to the latest annual report of Devynai International Ltd (DIL). Its revenue from operations was Rs 151.8 crore, and profit stood at 116.6 crore for the financial year ended March 31, 2024. Costa Coffee's gross margin declined marginally to 75.4 per cent from 76.8 per cent in FY24, primarily because of inflation in coffee beans and other input materials.

Merc-Benz India mulls price hike

**New Delhi:** Mercedes Benz India plans to hike prices by 1-1.5 per cent from September to mitigate the impact of a weak rupee against the euro, according to its MD and CEO Santosh Iyer. The luxury car market leader has already hiked vehicle prices twice this year, first in January and then in July. There is another price hike coming up in September, because of the euro. If you see, the last one month has remained at the 100 mark (INR), and that has not changed. Therefore, we will have to undertake an increase as well in September, said Iyer. The price hike is expected to be in the range of 1-1.5 per cent. Around 80 per cent of the company's new car sales are financed.

NLC India to source lithium

**New Delhi:** State-run NLC India is at an advanced stage of discussions with a Russian government-owned company for sourcing lithium from its mine in Africa. The development assumes significance as India is taking measures to ensure a stable supply of lithium to meet the country's clean energy demand. Sources privy to the development said that NLC India is in talks with a public sector company of Russia for equity participation in a lithium block in Mali, Africa. India is focusing on exploring and developing lithium blocks both in the domestic market and overseas, as the demand for this critical mineral is growing, particularly from electric vehicle battery manufacturers. The company had bagged two critical and strategic mineral blocks in the fifth round of auction. It won two phosphorite and limestone blocks in the state of Chhattisgarh.



“

Vietnamese and Taiwanese firms are keen to invest in India. We need to support them so that they can import these goods smoothly into the country for their manufacturing facilities

RK JALAN |  
COUNCIL FOR LEATHER EXPORTS (CLE) CHAIRMAN

NCLAT REJECTS RP IN HNG CASE

The insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT has set aside NCLT's direction to change the resolution professional of debt-ridden Hindustan National Glass Industries (HNG) and asked it to take a decision on the bids as per the Supreme Court's directions. A three-member NCLAT bench gave a go-ahead to the Kolkata Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to decide as per the directions passed by the Supreme Court



COST, CLIMATE, COMPLIANCE CALL

GOVT EASES FGD RULE

*The government is relaxing sulphur emission rules for coal power plants. This move aims to lower electricity costs by 25-30 paise per unit*

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 13:** The government's move to ease sulphur emission rules for most coal-fired power plants strikes a delicate balance between costs, climate and compliance and is expected to cut electricity costs by 25-30 paise per unit, officials said Sunday.

In a gazette notification, the government has restricted the 2015 mandate of installing flue-gas desulphurisation (FGD) systems that remove sulphur from power plants' exhaust gases.

Plants in critically polluted areas or non-attainment cities will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis while all other plants -- accounting for nearly 79 per cent of India's thermal power capacity -- are exempt from mandatory FGD installation.

The notification stated that the decision was made following a detailed analysis by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which found increased carbon dioxide emissions resulting from the operation of existing control measures.



Industry officials said this would lead to differentiated compliance based on proximity to urban populations and the sulphur content of the coal used. The new framework has been finalised after extensive deliberations and multiple independent studies.

The decision follows a series of studies by IIT Delhi, CSIR-NEERI and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), which found that ambient sulphur dioxide levels in most parts of India are well within the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

Measurements across multiple cities showed sulphur oxide levels ranging between 3 and 20 micrograms per cubic meter, significantly below the NAAQS threshold of 80 micrograms per cubic meter. Officials said studies had also questioned the environmental and economic

efficacy of a universal FGD mandate in the Indian context.

Indian coal typically has a sulphur content of less than 0.5 per cent, and due to high stack heights and favourable meteorological conditions, dispersion of SO2 is efficient.

The NIAS study warned that retrofitting FGDs nationwide would add an estimated 69 million tonnes of CO2 emissions between 2025 and 2030 due to increased limestone mining, transportation, and power consumption. Globally, carbon markets aim to incentivise generators that are reducing their carbon footprint and penalise those who are emitting carbon.

With the installation of FGD, India may be increasing its carbon footprint with a reduction in SO2 emission, which is not advisable as per the present ambient air quality levels, according to a report written by CSIR-NEERI with financial sup-

port from NITI Aayog.

Besides, SO and CO have different atmospheric lifetimes - SO has a short atmospheric life-time of several hours to about 15 days, while CO persists for over 100 years.

The financial burden of mandatory FGD retrofitting was previously estimated at over Rs 2.5 lakh crore, or Rs 1.2 crore per MW, with installation time-limits of up to 45 days per unit.

Several power producers had warned that this would not only raise costs but also jeopardise grid stability during peak seasons.

Industry executives welcomed the decision. "This is a rational, science-based move that avoids unnecessary costs and focuses regulation where it is most needed," said a senior executive at a leading public sector utility. "More importantly, it will help keep electricity affordable."

Officials stressed that the government remains committed to environmental protection, but with a smarter lens. "This is not a rollback. It is a recalibration based on evidence," said a senior government official. "Our approach is now targeted, efficient and climate-conscious."

An affidavit incorporating these findings will be submitted shortly to the Supreme Court in the MC Mehta vs Union of India case, where FGD enforcement timelines have been under judicial scrutiny.

FUEL OF FUTURE

IBA seeks subsidy for household biogas plants

*Biogas can replace free LPG cylinders help saving around ₹3,618 crore per year*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 13:** Indian Biogas Association has pitched for a scheme to provide Rs 10,000 per unit subsidy for reviving 50 lakh biogas units, which are ready with basic infrastructure, saying it can spur mass adoption of the cleaner fuel, especially in rural India.

Indian Biogas Association (IBA) Chairman Gaurav Kedia told that the overall government spends on the scheme would be Rs 5,000 crore, which could be recovered in two years.

He stated that IBA has called for the government to lead a bold, forward-looking attempt to support 50 lakh biogas units across the country. Infrastructure for these units is already in place and incentives are needed to spur mass adoption in rural India, he noted.

"A focused, mission-driven approach like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan can deliver meaningful results in this direction. Most of these systems are underutilised or idle because of insufficient funding, maintenance, and long-term incentives.

"It is high time we move from potential to performance and convert biogas into a real household fuel of the future. IBA calls for a policy revolu-



₹10,000 per unit

tion to make biogas systems not only accessible but rewarding," he said.

As under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), where the Government of India provides a subsidy of Rs 12,000 to eligible rural households for constructing individual household toilets (IHHL), a similar model could be considered for reviving small biogas plants, assuming a revival cost of approximately Rs 10,000 per unit, he suggested.

He informed that the IBA will propose to the government a one-time grant of Rs 10,000 per plant to restore non-operative units to bring dead assets to life, increase clean energy production and enhance the return on public and private sector investments.

Given that rural Biogas plants can substitute the sub-

Russian oil import hits 11-month high



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 13:** India's import of crude oil from Russia rose to an 11-month high in June as refiners topped up tanks amid the Israel-Iran war, analysts said.

India imported 2.08 million barrels per day (bpd) of Russian crude in June, the highest since July 2024, according to vessel tracking data from global commodity market analytics firm Kpler.

"While India's global imports of crude oil dropped by 6 per cent in June, Russian volumes saw an 8 per cent month-on-month rise to their highest levels since July 2024," European think tank Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said.

"More than half of these imports from Russia were made by three refineries in India, which also export refined products to G7+ countries."

India imports more than 85 per cent of its requirement of crude oil, which is turned into fuels like petrol and diesel

in refineries. Traditionally, the Middle East was the main source, but Russia has been the mainstay supplier for nearly three years now.

After much of the West shunned Russian crude following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia began offering steep discounts to attract alternative buyers. Indian refiners seized the opportunity, turning Russia, once a marginal supplier, into India's largest source of crude oil, overtaking traditional suppliers from West Asia. Russia now accounts for as much as 40 per cent of India's oil imports.

In June, India imported approximately 8.93,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude from Iraq - its second-largest supplier - marking a 17.2 per cent month-on-month decline. Saudi Arabia followed with 5,81,000 bpd (largely unchanged from May), while imports from the UAE rose 6.5 per cent to 4,90,000 bpd.

Mcap of eight firms erodes by ₹2.07L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 13:** The combined market valuation of eight of the top 10 valued firms eroded by Rs 2.07 lakh crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and Bharti Airtel emerging as the worst hit.

Last week, the benchmark BSE Sensex dropped 932.42 points or 1.11 per cent. From the top 10 pack, only Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever closed the week with gains in their valuation.

Among major losers, the market valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tumbled Rs 56,279.35 crore to Rs 11,81,450.30 crore. Shares of TCS dropped nearly 3.50 per cent Friday after its June quarter earnings failed to enthuse investors.

Bharti Airtel's valuation eroded by Rs 54,483.62 crore to Rs 10,95,887.62 crore.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries dropped by Rs 44,048.2 crore to Rs 20,22,901.67 crore and that of Infosys by Rs 18,818.86 crore to Rs 6,62,564.94 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank tanked Rs 14,556.84 crore to Rs 10,14,913.73 crore. The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) diminished by Rs 11,954.25 crore to Rs 5,83,322.91 crore.

The mcap of HDFC Bank declined by Rs 4,370.71 crore to Rs 15,20,969.01 crore and State Bank of India went lower by Rs 2,989.75 crore to Rs 7,21,555.53 crore. However, the valuation of Hindustan Unilever Ltd jumped Rs 42,363.13 crore to Rs 5,92,120.49 crore. Shares of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) Friday surged nearly 5 per cent after the company announced that Priya Nair will become its first woman CEO and MD.

The mcap of Bajaj Finance climbed Rs 5,033.57 crore to Rs 5,80,010.68 crore.

Reliance Industries was the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever in that order.



Electronics, pharma sectors corner 70% of PLI disbursements

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 13:** Large-scale electronics manufacturing and pharmaceuticals cornered about 70 per cent of the total fiscal incentive disbursements in 2024-25 under the production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes, according to government data.

The scheme was introduced in 2021 to support domestic manufacturing across 14 sectors with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore.

In 2024-25, the government has disbursed a total of Rs 10,114 crore. PLI firms in the electronics sector received Rs 5,732 crore, while pharmaceu-

tical drugs received Rs 2,328 crore, the data showed.

In 2023-24, the disbursals stood at Rs 9,721 crore. The figures highlight the country's growing strength in these segments amid efforts to boost manufacturing and value-added exports.

Besides these two, the other sectors that received these incentives in the last fiscal include bulk drugs (Rs 22 crore), Medical Devices (Rs 77 crore), Telecom (Rs 840 crore), Food Processing (Rs 448 crore), White Goods (Rs 210 crore), Automobiles (Rs 322 crore), Specialty Steel (Rs 48 crore), Textiles (Rs 40 crore) and Drones (Rs 35 crore).



The PLI in the electronics sector have helped significantly boost domestic manufacturing and exports. Now, this sector is included in the top three

product categories that India exports globally.

The country's electronic goods shipment saw the highest export growth rate

at 32.46 per cent, jumping from \$29.12 billion in 2023-24 to \$38.58 billion in the last fiscal year. It was \$23.6 billion in 2022-23 and \$15.7 billion in 2021-22.

Within this, computer hardware and peripherals, which form 3.8 per cent of the sector, saw 101 per cent growth, doubling from \$0.7 billion to \$1.4 billion in 2024-25.

The main destinations for electronic goods were UAE, US, Netherlands, UK, and Italy.

According to the data, Indian drugs and pharmaceuticals are reaching over 200 countries now. These exports increased by about 10 per cent to \$30.5 billion in 2024-25.



# Sensational Sinner

Sinner dethrones Alcaraz to become the first Italian man to win Wimbledon in the competition's 148-year history

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, July 13: Jannik Sinner defeated two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 Sunday to win his first Wimbledon championship and reverse the result of their epic French Open final five weeks ago.

The No 1-ranked Sinner earned his fourth Grand Slam title overall, moving him one away from No 2 Alcaraz's total as the two young rivals separate themselves from the rest of the pack in men's tennis.

This victory also allowed Sinner, a 23-year-old Italian, to put an end to several streaks for Alcaraz, a 22-year-old Spaniard.

Alcaraz had won the past five head-to-head matches between the pair, most recently across five sets and nearly 5 1/2 hours at Roland-Garros June 8. Sinner took a two-set lead in that one, then held a trio of match points, but couldn't close the deal. That made Alcaraz 5-0 in major finals.

In addition to ending that piece of perfection, Sinner asserted himself in a match that featured moments of terrific play by both men, but also the occasional lapses.

Alcaraz stepped into the sunlight bathing Centre Court as the owner of a career-best 24-match un-

beaten run. He had won 20 matches in a row at the All England Club, including victories against Novak Djokovic in the 2023 and 2024 finals.

The last man to beat Alcaraz at Wimbledon? Sinner, in the fourth round in 2022.

So this served as a book-end win for Sinner, who proved what

he kept telling anyone who asked: No, there would be no carryover from his heartbreak in Paris. Hard to imagine, though, that that collapse wasn't on his mind at least a little Sunday, especially when he faced two break points while serving at 4-3, 15-40 in the fourth set.

Yes, Sinner put the French Open behind

■ Sinner becomes the first man to beat Alcaraz in a Grand Slam final

■ It ends Alcaraz's dreams of winning a hattrick of Wimbledon titles, and gives Sinner his fourth Grand Slam

him in the best way possible and demonstrated that his matchups with Alcaraz could delight tennis fans for years to come.

They have divvied up the past seven Grand Slam trophies, and nine of the last 12.

Fittingly, this marked the first time the same two men faced off in the title matches on the clay at Roland-Garros and the grass at the All England Club in the same year since Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal did it in 2006, 2007 and 2008. It hadn't happened for more than a half-century before that trilogy.

Sinner has participated in each of the last four major finals, a stretch that began with a triumph at the Open

the US last September and followed another the Australian Open this January.



A CHANCE TO BE PART OF

METTLE MEET 2025

HERE . NOW

OrissaPOST

QUIZ Extravaganza

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

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

TODAY'S QUESTION

This historic day in 1789 saw the storming of a medieval fortress and prison in Paris, marking a pivotal moment in the French Revolution. What national holiday does France celebrate on this date?

ANSWER TO SUNDAY'S QUESTION

Ethiopia

RULES & REGULATIONS

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

THE TWO LUCKY WINNERS

ARADHYA MALLICK

RUDRA NARAYAN NAHAK

Others who answered correctly are

Surendra Pradhan, Sarthak Sushobhit, Mayank Mandol, Asit Kumar Satpathy, Parameswar Dalai, Manoranjan Behera, Priyanka Nahak, Om Swarup Das, Dr Joseph John, Sourav Nayak, Alok Ranjan Sahoo, Parameswar Dalai, Rudra Narayan Nahak, Debadatta Tripathy, Subham Jena, Tanishna Bisoi

## SHORT TAKES

### Unstoppable Messi

Fort Lauderdale: Lionel Messi extended his historic streak to five straight multi-goal games, and Inter Miami snapped Nashville SC's 15-match unbeaten streak with a 2-1 win Saturday night. Miami (11-3-5) won its fifth straight match and moved to fifth in the Supporter's Shield standings as it aims to win the title for the second-straight season. Messi entered Saturday's match as the only player in Major League Soccer history with four straight multi-goal games after scoring two in Miami's win over the New England Revolution Wednesday. And he wasn't done. The 38-year-old opened the scoring Saturday on a free kick in the 17th minute. Then after Nashville tied it early in the second half, Messi put his side back on top with a steal and score in the 62nd.

### PCB in trouble

Karachi: The Auditor General of Pakistan has exposed a number of financial irregularities running into millions of rupees, illegal appointments and award of contracts in the Pakistan Cricket Board. The Audit report has mentioned several instance of irregularities including a payment of Rs 63.39 million to the police for meals for providing security during international matches.

## SHOOTING WC

# Lakshay, Neeru fall short as India's campaign ends

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 13: India ended engagements at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Shotgun in Lonato, after the pair of Lakshay Sheoran (22,19,25) and Neeru Dhandha (25,24,25), despite shooting a perfect third series, fell short of the Trap Mixed Team medal rounds. They totalled 140 out of a possible 150 in the qualifying round to finish 10th among 54 pairs.

The second Indian pair of Zoravar Singh Sandhu (21,23,24) and Preeti Rajak (23,24,23) combined for a tally of 138 to finish in 22nd spot.

Four teams, Australia, Great Britain and both the Spanish teams topped the qualifications with identical tallies of 143.

Indian pair of Kynan Chenai and Sabeera Harris had won a bronze in the Trap Mixed Team event at the previous Nicosia Shotgun World Cup. The event will be held for the first time in the Olympics at Los Angeles in 2028.

On Saturday, National



Games champion Neeru Dhandha reached a first-ever World Cup final to finish a creditable fourth in women's trap, on the penultimate day.

Having taken the sixth and final qualifying spot by virtue of winning (2-1) a shoot-off over last year's New Delhi World Cup Final winner Alessia Tezzi (Italy), Neeru eventually went out due to a higher bib number.

Australia's Laetisha Scanlan won gold with 45 hits. While Neeru continued from her brilliant fourth-place finish in the women's trap a day earlier to miss just one target out of her 75, Lakshay had a blip in the second series, where he missed six, which eventually cost a shot at a podium finish.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, July 13: Washington Sundar put India in the best possible position to win the Lord's Test with a four-wicket haul before batters stuttered to 58 for four at stumps on day four, chasing 193 on a rapidly deteriorating pitch here Sunday.

After the good work of the pacers, Washington made the ball talk with his off-spin, his timely strikes allowing India to skittle out England for 192 in the final session.

Mohammed Siraj made the difference in the morning before Jasprit Bumrah returned to polish the tail.

At stumps, India stuttered to 58 for four, having lost Yashasvi Jaiswal, Karun Nair, captain Shubman Gill and night watchman Akash Deep.

With the crowd egging on the home team in the last few overs, every ball was made into an event.

India gave England a taste of their own medicine, deliberately delaying the proceedings with KL Rahul (33 off 47) and Akash in the middle.

Ben Stokes castled Akash on what turned out to be the final ball of the day, setting up a thrilling



finish on day five.

Jaiswal could not get into a position to pull a pacy short ball from Jofra Archer while Nair (14 off 33) could not convert his start once again and was trapped in front by Brydon Carse after misjudging the length and offering no shot. A relentless Carse then got the prized wicket of Gill, who was adjudged leg before off a sharp incoming delivery.

Carse had kept asking questions to Gill in that over and was duly rewarded.

Rahul would have been

back in the hut too if he was not dropped by Chris Woakes off his own bowling. Rahul's cover driving has been impeccable this series and it was on display in the last hour of play against both Woakes and Archer.

Indian pacers generated awkward bounce from the Nursery End but their English counterparts, barring Stokes, were not able to extract the same before close of play.

After three days, nothing separated the two teams with India matching En-

gland's first innings total of 387 but the latter put their nose ahead Saturday.

In the afternoon session, Washington's two timely strikes pegged England back, leaving them at 175 for six at tea.

BRIEF SCORES
England 387 and 192 all out in 62.1 overs (Joe Root 40, Ben Stokes 33; Washington Sundar 4/22, Mohammed Siraj 2/31, Jasprit Bumrah 2/38)
India 387 and 58 for 4 in 17.4 overs (KL Rahul 33 not out; Brydon Carse 2/11)

# Harikrishnan A Ra becomes 87th GM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 13: The first thing Grandmaster Shyam Sundar Mohanraj noticed about Harikrishnan A Ra was his calculation skills when he joined his academy, Chess Thulir in Chennai, as an early bird in 2022.

Harikrishnan, 24, Friday earned his third GM-norm at the La Plagne International Chess Festival in France to become the country's 87th Grandmaster and bring joy to his coach Mohanraj, who has seen two players from his academy become GMs in a span of months.

The Chennai-based Harikrishnan earned his first GM norm some years back. He then gained his second one at Andujar Open in Spain.

Srihari LR became the 86th GM and now Harikrishnan has also achieved the feat.



# India lose 5th T20I by 5 wickets but win series against Eng

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Birmingham, July 13: A historic maiden Women's T20 series victory already scripted against England, India failed to end on a high, losing to the hosts by five wickets in a last-ball thriller in an inconsequential fifth and final match here.

India, however, won the series 3-2.

India rode on Shafali Verma's quick-fire 75 to score 167 for 7, a target which England chased down with five wickets to spare on the last ball.

Sent in to bat Saturday, India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana started on an aggressive note, hitting

Em Arlott for consecutive boundaries in the opening over before perishing on the last delivery, caught by Linsey Smith at point while trying to pull a short delivery.

Jemimah Rodrigues too didn't last long, departing an over later bowled by Smith.

Shafali Verma (75) and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (15) then stitched 66 runs off 43 balls for the third wicket to take India forward before the latter was forward before the latter was cleaned up by off-spinner Charlie Dean (3/23).

Next in Harleen Deol too failed to make a mark, out LBW to Sophie Ecclestone (2/28). Shafali, on the other hand, was going great guns



by dealing in boundaries to notch up her score in just 41 balls. She hit 13 boundaries and a six.

In fact in the seventh over, Shafali was particularly severe on medium pacer Issy Wong, hitting

the bowler for three boundaries and a six to pick up 20 runs. She played her shots all around the ground, with

the straight drive over the bowler's head standing out. Shafali brought up her fifty in just 23 balls, the second joint-fastest by an Indian woman in WT20s, when she smashed Ecclestone over the covers for four.

Dean finally got the prized scalp of Shafali in the 14th over when Maia Bouchier took a brilliant diving catch at long on with India at 111 for 5.

Wicket-keeper Richa Ghosh struck a quick 16-ball 24, while Radha Yadav made a run-a-ball 14 as India made 56 runs off last 41 balls.

Chasing, openers Sophia Dunkley (46 off 30) and Danielle Wyatt-Hodge (56 off 37) gave England a flying start, sharing a 101-run stand in

just 10.4 overs to set the tone.

India made a comeback by dismissing both Dunkley and Wyatt-Hodge in quick succession but skipper Tammy Beaumont (30) and Bouchier (16) ensured a win. There was a slight scare for England in the final over when they needed six runs. Right-arm pacer Arundhati Reddy (2/47) picked up two wickets in the last over – first disturbing Beaumont's stumps with a slower delivery and then dismissing Amy Jones, caught by Radha a ball later with England still needing 5 off 3 balls.

India and England will now engage in a three-match ODI series, starting July 16 at Southampton.

"In a matter of two months, the academy has produced two Grandmasters. It feels great because of back-to-back GMs whom I have been training for last 2-3 years," said Moharaj, as he reflected on the lean phase lasting more than a year when he could not produce a GM.

"It's a big relief for both me and Harikrishnan. Because he lost two GM norms in a row."

Though he cannot recollect the exact date, Mohanraj remembers the month Harikrishnan, already an International Master by then, came to his academy seeking guidance to become a GM.