



Shruti's self-love

Actor-musician Shruti Haasan, following breakup with boyfriend Santanu Hazarika, opens up about embracing singlehood

LEISURE | P2



Beijing backs RIC revival

China backs Russia's push to revive the Russia-India-China (RIC) troika, calling it vital for the shared interest of the three nations

INTERNATIONAL | P10



No oil threat

India shuns threat of US imposing sanctions on countries buying Russian oil, saying will meet oil needs

BUSINESS | P11



Pragg stuns Carlsen

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa takes down world number one Magnus Carlsen en route the quarterfinals at Freestyle Grand Slam Tour

SPORTS | P12

Govt: Ensure safety of women at workplace

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 17: The state government Thursday directed all departments to ensure safety of women at workplace.

The direction came in the wake of the self-immolation death of a college student following an alleged inaction by the authorities over her complaint of sexual harassment against a teacher in Balasore.

Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja wrote to all government departments to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 by all institutions or organisations.

In the letter, the Chief Secretary said that the implementation of the Act in workplaces and institutions is essential to ensure a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all, particularly women.

Ahuja also directed the department heads and authorities that the compliance report on the action points be submitted to the Women and Child Development department within 15 days.

“Sexual harassment not only violates an individual’s dignity and rights but also undermines productivity, morale, and equal opportunities,” he said. Ahuja also mentioned in the letter that by enforcing the Act, organisations fulfil their legal and ethical responsibility to prevent, prohibit, and redress instances of harassment.

He said it fosters a culture of accountability, encourages reporting without fear, and builds trust among employees or members, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more equitable work or institutional space.

Ahuja has also advised all the department authorities to go for the constitution of Internal Committee (IC), capacity building and sensitisation, time-bound inquiry and redressal mechanism, annual reporting and transparency and responsibility of management.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, the government still encourages you to sell pakoras, samosas, jalebis... just add a health warning

IRAQ MALL FIRE KILLS 69

REUTERS

Baghdad, July 17: A massive fire in a hypermarket in al-Kut city in southern Iraq has left at least 69 people dead and 11 others missing, the city’s health authorities and two police sources told Reuters Thursday.

Reuters’ footage of the aftermath of the overnight fire showed the blackened exterior of ‘Corniche Hypermarket’ building, with rescue teams and security forces still at the site.

Videos verified by Reuters showed firefighters spraying water on the blazing building overnight and people climbing from the roof with the help of rescue teams.

“We have more bodies that have not been recovered still under fire debris,” city official Ali al-Mayahi told Reuters.

BANDH CRIPPLES LIFE

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 17: Normal life came to a standstill in the state Thursday as Opposition Congress and seven other political parties enforced a 12-hour bandh over the death of a student of FM (Autonomous) College in Balasore who set herself on fire after being denied justice in an alleged sexual harassment incident.

There were no reports of violence or untoward incidents from any part of the state, a senior Home department official said, adding that the bandh has mostly affected transport and business sectors.

Roads in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and other parts of the state wore a deserted look, while train services were affected in some places due to picketing on tracks. According to an ECoR official, some trains which were detained early in the day resumed operations after police cleared the protesters from the tracks.

“However, several trains were running late since 6am due to the demonstrations,” the ECoR official added. Markets, schools and business establishments remained closed in almost all places across the state. However, there was no adverse impact on the operations of essential services like ambulances, hospitals and milk parlours.



Congress leaders, including OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das and party's Odisha in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu, take out a bike rally in Bhubaneswar during the 12-hour bandh, Thursday

PIC: MANORANJAN MISHRA

Protesters staged blockades on several arterial roads in the state Capital, raising slogans against the BJP government and demanding justice for the deceased college girl. Leaders of the Congress, CPI, CPI(M), CPIM (ML), Forward Bloc, RJD, SP and NCP hit the streets, holding their party flags to enforce the bandh.

They demanded justice for the college girl, who succumbed to 95 per cent burns during treatment at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar late Monday night. There was a scuffle between security personnel and Congress supporters near the CM’s residence.

OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das and party’s Odisha in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu were among the protesters taken to custody by police, sources said. “We have been requesting people to support the bandh as women are no longer safe in Odisha since the BJP formed

the government in the state. As many as 15 women and girls are raped every day in the state, and the government has completely failed to check such incidents,” Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam alleged. Opposition parties had re-

CM: Odisha active partner in nation's governance reforms

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 17: Odisha is proud to be an active partner in India’s journey towards responsive and transparent governance, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said Thursday.

Majhi, along with Union Minister Jitendra Singh, inaugurated a two-day national conference on good governance practices at Lok Seva Bhawan here.

In his keynote address, Majhi highlighted Odisha’s strides in administrative transformation, from paperless budgeting to digital grievance redressal system. “Our annual Budget presentation is now entirely paperless. For internal government communication, we have implemented OSWAS (Odisha Secretariat Workflow Automation System), a fully automated system that has significantly reduced response time,” the CM said, adding that OSWAS has made governance more respon-



sive and transparent.

As part of the good governance initiative, most of the citizen-centric services are now available online. Basic services such as obtaining birth/death and residence certificates, and benefits from various schemes are just a click away on mobile phones, Majhi said.

Asserting that the state’s grievance redressal mechanism is nothing short of revolutionary, he said, “In addition to personally addressing people’s grievances as often as possible, we have an online platform for automated grievance redressal that is highly effective.”

“Odisha is proud to contribute

not just as a host but as an active partner in India’s journey towards responsive and transparent governance,” Majhi added. He said Odisha has embraced the vision of PM Narendra Modi to transform India from ‘rule-based to role-based’ governance. “We are empowering civil servants by transforming them from being ‘karmachari’ to ‘karmayogi’,” he added.

Singh stressed the importance of regional collaboration for reform in governance.

“Good governance means turning every challenge into an opportunity. By holding these conferences across different states, we ensure that governance models are both locally relevant and nationally cohesive,” he said.

Jointly organised by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances and the Odisha government, the inaugural occasion of the conference saw participation of 400 delegates from across the country.

ED charge sheet against Vadra

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 17: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday filed a charge sheet against Robert Vadra, the businessman husband of Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in a land deal in Haryana’s Shikohpur, official sources said.

His office issued a statement later saying the present proceedings are nothing more than an extension of the political witch hunt by the present government against Vadra.

This is the first time that any probe agency has filed a prosecution complaint naming Vadra in a criminal case. The ED, sources told PTI, has also attached 43 immovable properties worth ₹37.64 crore related to Vadra and his linked entities like Sky Light Hospitality Pvt. Ltd. A provisional attachment order was issued by the agency Wednesday under the PMLA, they said. The source said the charge sheet has been filed before the Rouse Avenue court here.

GMU asst prof arrested for sexual exploitation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, July 17: An assistant professor of Gangadhar Meher University (GMU) here was arrested Thursday for allegedly sexually exploiting a 20-year-old student of the premier institution on the pretext of marriage, police said.

“Dr Gopikanta Suna, 32, Assistant Professor, School of Education, GMU in Sambalpur, has been arrested in connection with Mahila PS case-56 of July 16, 2025 under Section 69 of BNS,” said Sambalpur SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo.

Suna was arrested from his official residence at Professor Colony and produced before a court here. He was later remanded to judicial custody following rejection of the bail plea, an official said.

In her complaint, the woman alleged that Suna, a resident of Dahita village under Buden police limits in Bargarh district, sexually exploited her

quested the authorities of markets, transport, educational institutions, offices and banks to support the shutdown call.

“The bandh is being observed peacefully across the state, including Bhubaneswar, and people have been supporting the cause for which we are fighting,” Das said.

Asked about the inconvenience faced by people stranded at bus stands and railway stations, Das said, “We are with the people and requesting them to cooperate. Those with emergency needs are being allowed to proceed.”

Lallu claimed, “People from all walks of life—businessmen, trade unions, petrol pump workers—have extended their support to the bandh.”

“The people are not accepting the circumstances in which the college student self-immolated her. The victim had pleaded for help for over a week, from MLAs, MPs, college authorities to the CM’s office — yet no one responded. This is not suicide; it is institutional murder. Our fight will continue until the CM and Union Education Minister resign,” Lallu said. CPI(M) state secretary Suresh Panigrahi demanded a judicial probe into the incident.

In support of the bandh, the Odisha Petroleum Dealers’ Association shut down all fuel stations across the state from 6am to 6pm. **MORE P3&5**



Gopikanta Suna

for months on the promise of marriage. However, he later refused to marry her.

Following his arrest, the university suspended the assistant professor with immediate effect.

The incident comes a few days after a 20-year-old female student of FM (Autonomous) College in Balasore set herself on fire following alleged inaction by the authorities over her complaint of sexual harassment against a teacher.

She died at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar Monday night.

Europe's oldest lake settlement uncovered in Albania

REUTERS

Lin (Albania), July 17: Archaeologists working on the shores of Ohrid Lake in Albania are convinced they have uncovered the oldest human settlement built on a European lake, finding evidence of an organised hunting and farming community living up to 8,000 years ago.

The team, from Switzerland and Albania, spends hours each day about three metres (9.8 feet) underwater, painstakingly retrieving wooden stilts that supported houses.

They are also collecting bones of domesticated and wild animals, copper objects and ceramics, featuring detailed carvings.

Albert Hafner, from the University of Bern, said similar settlements have been found



in Alpine and Mediterranean regions, but the settlements in the village of Lin are half a millennium older, dating back between 6,000 and 8,000 years.

“Because it is under water, the organic material is well-preserved and this al-

lows us to find out what these people have been eating, what they have been planting,” Hafner said.

Multiple studies show that Ohrid Lake, shared by North Macedonia and Albania, is the oldest lake in Europe, at over

- The team, from Switzerland and Albania, spends hours each day about three metres underwater, painstakingly retrieving wooden stilts that supported houses
- The age of the findings is determined through radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology
- More than 1,000 wood samples have been collected from the site, which may have hosted several hundred people
- It is believed to cover around six hectares, but so far, only about one per cent has been excavated after six years of work

one million years.

The age of the findings is determined through radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology, which measures annual growth rings in trees. More than one thousand wood samples have been collected

from the site, which may have hosted several hundred people.

It is believed to cover around six hectares, but so far, only about one per cent has been excavated after six years of work.

Hafner said findings show that people who lived on the lake helped to spread agriculture and livestock to other parts of Europe.

“They were still doing hunting and collecting things but the stable income for the nutrition was coming from the agriculture,” he said.

Albanian archaeologist Adrian Anastasi said it could take decades to fully explore the area.

“(By) the way they had lived, eaten, hunted, fished and by the way the architecture was used to build their settlement, we can say they were very smart for that time,” Anastasi said.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Today, you will show everyone what you're capable of. You are likely to come up with great ideas and work strategies, which will prove productive. However, if appreciation doesn't come your way, Ganesha says you must learn to take disappointment in your stride.

TAURUS
The time you previously spent on certain activities may not yield results as expected, predicts Ganesha. You will be reluctant to travel today. Your may find yourself wanting more space and freedom of expression. A stroll with your sweetheart, hand in hand, may be the highlight of your day, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
You will end up having an argument with people owing to your aggressive nature. These people could slander your reputation on account of your enmity. However you will be able to defeat them. They will have to give up against your intellectual superiority. Be wary, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Today looks set to be a day full of extremes, especially when it comes to your shifty moods. However, you will need to keep reminding yourself of not getting overly emotional or impractical. Otherwise you may end up being in complicated situations, warns Ganesha. It is high time that you gave due consideration to your health and eating habits. Consciously cultivate change. Overeating is a strong probability!

LEO
Your children's health may be a cause of concern today, says Ganesha. The best way to put your and your family's fears to rest would be by paying a quick visit to the doctor. As always, kids remain a surprise package of delights; the happiness of your children shall double your joy as a parent. But then, Ganesha reminds, only a healthy kid is a happy kid.

VIRGO
Expenditures will be like oil spills—wasteful and dirty. But cosmic energies and positivity are gathering wind today, and you should do well to make full use of them in your personal and professional life, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
Ganesha says today is the right day to get closer to your loved one. You will spend the evening with your beloved. Today you will be mentally very energetic too. Make the most of the day.

SCORPIO
There are strong indications that today you will be receptive and sensitive towards the needs of other people. Negative vibes will disrupt your thinking, and you will rely on the company of close friends to keep you in good cheer. Do not succumb to the pessimism that might cloud your thought today as it is only a passing phase, advises Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
No pains, no gains. So, when you go through a lot of turmoil and toil hard for your work, the rewards are definitely going to be fruitful, says Ganesha. Time for get together and soiree with family and friends! In a nutshell, a day with lot of fun activities.

CAPRICORN
Despite repeated failures, very few realise that the key to success is in having the patience of a saint. Vexation invariably leads to an outburst which, in turn, can ruin your reputation and future prospects in innumerable ways. Today, Ganesha advises you to keep your calm and smile back even if faced with an adverse situation. Doing as directed may help you overcome troubles and take the right decisions.

AQUARIUS
Be sure of your strengths and decisions, and Ganesha guarantees you success. You don't care what others think about you, but don't be so indifferent that you ignore their choices, preferences and comforts completely. The smile of you sweetheart will work like a charm and you will forget all your worries, feels Ganesha.

PISCES
Ganesha warns that your expenses could be twice as much as your income or profit. You need to be more careful in money matters. It is not an auspicious day for any new work, new deal or any new beginnings. Ganesha indicates that things will look up after two days or so.



PRETTY LITTLE BABY FAME FRANCIS PASSES AWAY

Connie Francis, beloved for hits like *Pretty Little Baby* and *Mama*, has died at 87. Her close friend Ron Roberts confirmed her passing, noting recent hospitalization. In her final days, Francis expressed heartfelt gratitude to fans for their unwavering love and support.

JLo DOESN'T WANT TO GET MARRIED ANYMORE

While performing on her *Up All Night* tour in Europe, Jennifer Lopez reacted to a fan's "JLo, marry me?" sign by saying, "I think I'm done with that. I've tried that a few times," hinting at her four past marriages.



Shruti defines singlehood

Mumbai: Shruti Haasan is currently in a relationship—with herself. In a refreshingly honest and deeply personal podcast conversation, the actor and musician opened up about embracing singlehood with newfound joy and clarity. "I genuinely love myself the most right now," she shared, reflecting the emotional strength she's cultivated over the years. "I've worked incredibly hard throughout my life to become my own person."

For Shruti, being single isn't a void to be filled—it's a phase of empowerment and self-exploration. She's channelling her energy into what truly matters: her craft, her music, and her personal evolution. Her words have resonated widely, especially with a generation that is increasingly choosing self-love and solitude over outdated societal expectations.

Known for breaking conventions—be it through her eclectic film choices, genre-defying music, or bold, unfiltered voice—Shruti continues to inspire as a symbol of independence and authenticity. She embraces vulnerability not as a weakness, but as a mark of strength and growth.

As she prepares for her upcoming pan-India release, *Coolie*, Shruti stands tall as a modern icon of self-assured living.

In a world where relationship status often defines worth, Shruti is re-defining the narrative—choosing self-love, and owning it unapologetically.

AGENCIES

Mumbai: Actress Zareen Khan has strongly criticised a troubling trend in paparazzi culture that she finds both disrespectful and objectifying. In a recent interview, the *Veer* actress expressed her discomfort with photographers who zoom in on female celebrities' body parts in videos and pictures, calling the practice "disgusting."

"I cannot really understand today's paparazzi culture. I'm not saying all of them do it, but there are many paps who zoom in on areas where there's absolutely no need to," she said. Zareen stressed that the focus should remain on a celebrity's face and work, not random or inappropriate close-ups. "A celebrity is known by their face, right? So how can you show some random body part and ask 'Guess who?' And that too a weird body part. I don't understand what they're trying to do," she added.

Zareen also noted that such videos are losing appeal, both among the media and the public. "Even the audience is not enjoying it anymore. They also find it disgusting," she remarked.

Recently, she called out photographers taking pictures of her from behind at a public event, saying, "*Mujhe dekho, ye nahi*." On the professional front, Zareen was last seen in *Hum Bhi Akele Tum Bhi Akele* (2021), with no new projects announced yet.

AGENCIES

Zareen slams paparazzi



Mumbai: At the 10th edition of India's International Movement to Unite Nations (I.I.M.U.N.) "Role Model Series", acclaimed actor Vidya Balan delivered an inspiring and emotional session that left a lasting impact on students. Moderated by I.I.M.U.N. founder Rishabh Shah, the candid conversation touched on individuality, rejection, and the critical importance of self-love in a world obsessed with validation.

"There is only one of you in the world, so don't waste your time trying to be anyone else," Balan urged the young audience. "You are unique, you're different, you're special—celebrate that every day of your life."

She reflected on her early struggles, recalling how her first Malayalam film was shelved midway, leading to multiple rejections and being labeled "jinx." "I was heartbroken," she shared. "But those were different times. Today, the pressure is relentless—one post gets five likes, another gets 500, and kids start questioning their worth."

Speaking on enduring rejection and finding resilience, Balan said, "I was replaced in a dozen films. I felt angry—with God, the world, even my parents. But I didn't give up." Her unwavering self-belief, she said, was her anchor, reminding students that self-love is the most powerful form of strength.

AGENCIES

Vidya's tips for young minds



Pooja on career's toughest song

Mumbai: Actress Pooja Hegde has talked about how the song *Monica* from the film *Coolie* was one of the most 'physically toughest and demanding' songs of her career.

Pooja took to Instagram, where she shared a string of behind-the-scenes videos and photographs. In one clip, she is heard talking about shooting while fasting for Maha Shivratri and the actress said "it feels great". Another video showcased the actress putting band aids on the blisters of her foot. She wrote in the caption: "Thank you for all the love on Monica. Monica was one of the MOST physically toughest and demanding song of my career. (sic)" Revealing why it was the toughest song of her career, she said: "Trying to combat the EXTREME heat, sun burn that's left tan lines for months to come.... humidity, the dust, blisters and high energy dance moves (my first hectic dance shoot after my ligament tear). (sic)"

She added: "And after all that, still making sure it looks GLAMOUROUS and effortless was the key. I gave my ALL to Monica and it's gonna be a blast to watch in the theatres, I promise. Dance away (sic)."

Pooja gave a special shout out to the dancers who stood by her in "this task and gave me energy through all that especially on the Mahashivratri day when I was fasting. You'll were just amazinggggg. (sic)"

IAN5



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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

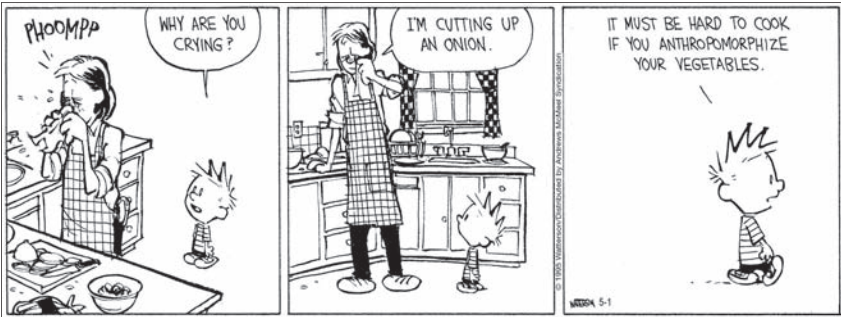
SUDOKU

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

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

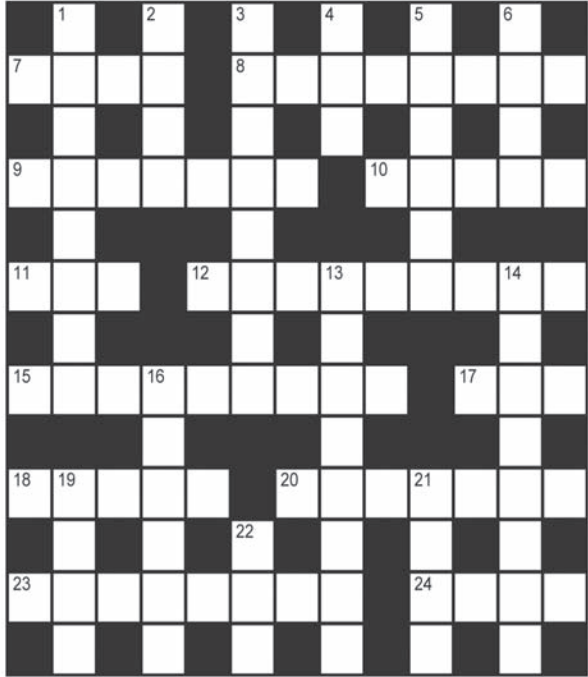


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 7 Milky-white gem
- 8 Pancake makers
- 9 Cottontails
- 10 Rose oil
- 11 New Zealand
- 12 Turkish bath (5,4)
- 15 Bali denizens
- 17 Query

- 18 Angler's bait
- 20 Pear-shaped tropical fruit
- 23 Think about
- 24 Russian river

Down

- 1 Sound system parts
- 2 Dieter's target
- 3 In a lather

- 4 Vitality
- 5 Newspaper specialist
- 6 Star in Lyra
- 13 Anteater
- 14 Volcanic glass
- 16 Nearly
- 19 Double-reed instrument
- 21 Sleuth's find
- 22 Eccentric

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

CB records statement of person who tried to save Soumyashree

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Balasore, July 17: The Crime Branch (CB) of Odisha Police Thursday recorded the statement of a person who suffered burn injuries while trying to save 20-year-old student Soumyashree Bisi who died after immolating herself over alleged sexual harassment, official sources said.

The Crime Branch Wednesday took over the investigation into the death of the student of Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College in Balasore.

Two officers of the Crime Branch visited SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack where Jyotiranjana Biswal, who was injured in his bid to save the student, is undergoing treatment, they said.

He is the lone available eyewitness who would be able to throw light on what actually happened on the college campus July 12 when the woman set herself on fire, they said.

She died while undergoing treatment at AIIMS Bhubaneswar Monday night.

While the woman student suffered 95 per cent burn injuries, Biswal suffered 15 per cent burns.

The Crime Branch officials asked Jyotiprakash about the sequence of events, whether she poured petrol on her or somebody poured or supplied the inflammable to the student, the sources said.

“This question is vital as the



deceased student's mother alleged that she doubts someone else set her daughter on fire,” an official said.

The team also spoke to Biswal's treating doctors at the Burn and Plastic Surgery Department of the hospital.

Meanwhile, a Crime Branch team, led by DSP Iman Kalyan Nayak, also visited the college in Balasore as part of the ongoing investigation into the incident.

“We have taken over the case

from the Sahadevkhunta police station in Balasore. The Crime Branch is verifying the investigation conducted by the district police. We are collecting information from the ground level,” Nayak told reporters.

Earlier, Balasore Police arrested two persons – Samira Kumar Sahoo, suspended head of the Education department, and Dillip Ghose, suspended principal of the college. They have been charged with abetment to suicide, sexual harassment, stalking, and insulting the modesty of a woman.

Also, the three-member high-level committee of the Higher Education department has issued a notice to the college principal and the members of the Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) for examination on the campus Friday. The committee had earlier interrogated the then college principal Dillip Ghose, who was subsequently arrested.

5 booked for harassing victim's family

The Balasore Police have registered a case against five persons at Bhograi police station based on an allegation of cyber harassment of the victim's family. The complaint was lodged by the brother of the deceased woman. Her brother, in his complaint, had alleged that five persons of the locality had been mentally harassing the family members by posting objectionable remarks on the family and even against the deceased woman on social media. “This was a mental torture for us when we are passing through the worst period after her death,” the brother wrote in the complaint. The police have booked the five persons under Sections 238 (causing disappearance of evidence), 253 (2) (making, publishing, or circulating false statements), 356 (2) (defamation) and 61 (2) (criminal conspiracy) of BNS.

Bandh hits life in City

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 17: Normal life was hit across the City Thursday following the 12-hour ‘Odisha Bandh’ enforced by Congress, and seven other Opposition parties, over the death of a Fakir Mohan Autonomous College student who set herself a blaze after being denied justice in an alleged sexual harassment case.

Since early morning hours, Congress and various Left party activists blocked roads at various junctions in the City and held demonstration at the railway station.

Offices and business establishments wore a deserted look, while vehicles on the NH-16 were stranded for a long time as the protestors, waving party flags and placards, squatted on the road and burnt tyres. Schools, colleges, other educational institutes also remained closed along with courts and government establishments.

However, vehicles carrying essential services and ambulances were not stopped during the bandh period.

Heavy police presence was seen on all major roads in the City during the day to maintain



law and order and disperse protestors. At many places, motorists were seen arguing with the agitators.

At Lower PMG Square, several Congress leaders and activists, led by OPEC president Bhakta Charan Das fought with the police when they were prevented from marching towards the state Assembly. Many activists were taken into custody for defying prohibitory orders.

The disruption in public transport brought miseries to commuters.

Sharing his experience, a City resident who was stopped by a group of agitators while travelling to a hospital due to an emergency, said, “We completely support the protest. But common people shouldn't pay the price. I had an urgent appointment with a doctor, but I won't be able to make it on time if I am not allowed to go by the protestors.”

BJP, BJD trade barbs over student's death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 17: Opposition BJD and ruling BJP Thursday traded barbs over the 20-year-old college student's death by self-immolation over alleged sexual harassment by a teacher.

While the saffron party accused the Opposition of disturbing the deceased's family, the BJD alleged that the authorities did not do anything when the student was running from pillar to post with her complaint.

The second-year BEd student of Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College in Balasore died at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar Monday night. She had set herself on fire on the college campus July 12 over inaction against a professor who allegedly sexually harassed her.

While the state was mourning the death of the student, “Congress leaders from Delhi” are unnecessarily creating disturbances in Odisha, Bhubaneswar MP and BJP's national spokesperson Aparajita Sarangi told a press conference.

She was referring to Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba and the party's Odisha-in-



charge Ajay Kumar Lallu.

Sarangi also targeted Leader of the Opposition Naveen Patnaik, the BJD president.

“Respected Naveen Patnaik Ji is shedding crocodile tears over the death of the female student. There have been many such incidents during the 24 years of the BJD government from 2000 to 2024,” the Bhubaneswar MP said. The BJP leader's barb at Patnaik was countered by BJD's vice-president Snehangini Chhuria and former MP Rajashree Mallick.

“Sarangi is making such a statement to hide the inefficiency of the BJP government



and blaming Naveen Patnaik. The BJD government under Patnaik's leadership played a leading role in raising the dignity of women in the state and providing justice to women,” Mallick said.

As a woman leader, the focus of Sarangi, a two-time MP, should be on how the victim student would get justice, Mallick said.

The people of Odisha have blessed Naveen Patnaik five times, the BJD leader said, wondering what success Sarangi achieved.

“How many times did Patnaik visit any victim in hospitals, as

many women were harassed and hospitalised during his tenure. Our CM has visited the Balasore college student twice at AIIMS and monitored her health condition,” Sarangi said.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi also offered to airlift the student for better treatment, and he spoke to her family members, she said, and asked, “Has Patnaik taken any such step as CM?”

Sarangi listed the steps taken by the state's BJP government after the student set herself ablaze. The state government suspended and arrested accused teacher Samira Kumar Sahoo and the college principal Dillip Ghose, she said.

This apart, Sarangi said, the health minister and the higher education minister stayed in touch with the family of the victim, and she was treated in consultation with AIIMS-Delhi. Sarangi said President Droupadi Murmu also visited student at the burn ward.

Referring to a complaint lodged by the victim's brother, Sarangi alleged that the family is feeling unsafe due to BJD and Congress leaders and workers. “He has complained that

they are being troubled by them (BJD and Cong people). They should not fear, the CM is standing by the family and also all women of the state,” she said.

BJD leaders Chhuria and Mallick lashed out at Aparajita.

“Sarangi is playing cheap politics on the death of a sister. The BJP is in power and it is free to take action against the people who are disturbing the victim's family. Sarangi is making such comments only for political gain. Don't distort fact by blaming others. Why didn't the police register a case after accepting the victim's complaint? Which leader of the ruling party put pressure on the police at that time also needs to be investigated,” Chhuria said.

She asked when the victim was going door to door for justice, was the government sleeping? “Apart from complaining to the college authorities, the victim sought the intervention of the local MP, MLA, the higher education minister and the chief minister. Though she had said that she would die by suicide if justice was not given, no one took action on her complaint,” Chhuria said.

India successfully test-fires N-capable Agni-I, Prithvi-II

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 17: India Thursday successfully test-fired nuclear-capable short range ballistic missiles Prithvi-II and Agni-I from an integrated test range off the Odisha coast, demonstrating its strategic deterrence capability.

The test-firing of the missiles, conducted by the elite Strategic Forces Command, validated all operational and technical parameters, according to the Defence Ministry.

On Wednesday, India successfully test-fired indigenously developed Akash Prime missile in Ladakh, that has been customised to operate at an altitude above 4,500 metres.

The test-firing of the missiles came over two months after the May 7-10 military conflict between India and Pakistan.

The Prithvi-II missile has a range of around 350 kms and it is capable of carrying a payload of up to 500 kgs. It can carry both conventional as well as nuclear warheads.

The Agni-I missile has a

range of 700-900 kms and it can carry a payload of 1,000 kgs.

Both Prithvi-II and Agni-I missiles have been an integral part of India's nuclear deterrence.

Short-range ballistic missiles – Prithvi-II and Agni-I – were successfully test-fired from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha July 17, the ministry said in a brief statement.

It said the launches validated all operational and technical parameters. These tests were conducted under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command, the ministry said.

On test-firing of Akash missile, the ministry said it carries added significance as it follows the exceptional performance of India's indigenously developed air defence systems during Operation Sindoor.

Akash Prime is an upgraded variant of the Akash weapon system built for the Indian Army.

The test-firing of the missile in Ladakh assumed significance as it is close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

‘BANDH ALONE WON’T CHANGE ANYTHING’

Civil society leaders, students, activists call for prompt government action and stricter enforcement of laws to ensure safety of women

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 17: A state-wide bandh brought Odisha to a standstill Thursday following the tragic self-immolation and death of a young female student who had reportedly faced sexual harassment and received no action from authorities despite multiple complaints.

The incident has triggered widespread anger, protests, and soul-searching across the state. Civil society leaders, students, and activists have united in grief and frustration — not only in mourning the loss but also condemning what many are calling a systemic administrative and societal failure.

However, they said calling a bandh to protest the tragedy is not enough to bring about a change in the system, or ensure safety to women.

Voicing strong skepticism over the effectiveness of bandhs, social activist



a political strategy than a tool for justice,” she said.

“Until stricter laws are enforced and civil society becomes more vigilant, more girls will continue to suffer and die in silence,” she added.

Srusti Misra, a university student, called the incident deeply shameful. “If a girl is not safe in an educational institution, then it is a disgrace.

Despite her repeated complaints, the government didn't act. If they had, she might still be alive



today,” she said.

However, she said observing bandh alone would not solve the actual problem, unless the government becomes pro-active in ensuring women's safety. “This bandh might have some impact, but what matters is whether the government takes real action.”

Shweta Agarwal from Unmukt Foundation called the situation ‘horrific’. “It is horrifying that a girl had to burn herself just to be heard. And

tragically, even this will be remembered only until the next headline replaces it,” she said. “Institutions are still silencing victims and protecting the accused. Why didn't anyone act when she was alive,” she asked.

A 2021 report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) cited by Agarwal noted 86 rapes occur daily in India, with 49 crimes against women every hour. Renowned social activist **Namrata Chadha**

pointed to complete administrative collapse. “The victim complained to her college, the police — yet no one acted. This is a failure of every authority responsible for her safety. Protests are being stifled instead of heard. That tells us everything,” she stated.

Abharani Choudhury, secretary of Odisha Patita Udhar Samiti (OPUS), said the situation reflects poorly on the state government. “Sexual harassment acts must be enforced strongly — otherwise, what's the point of having it? It's shocking that Odisha still lacks a functioning State Women's Commission even after a year of BJP rule,” she said. “The Chief Minister must answer what his government is doing for Beti Bachao beyond slogans.” While the bandh captured headlines and mobilised thousands, many remain doubtful that it will lead to meaningful reform without sustained public pressure and political accountability.



Ranital-Bhadrak stn fourth line gets nod

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 17: The Ministry of Railways has sanctioned the fourth line between Ranital Link Cabin and Bhadrak station (5.06 km) at an estimated cost of ₹149.32 crore.

According to a release issued by East Coast Railway (ECoR), this vital project will significantly boost the capacity and efficiency of train operations along Howrah–Chennai mainline and improve freight connectivity to Dhamra and Paradip ports. The Ranital Link Cabin–Bhadrak section is part of the Howrah–Chennai High-Density Network (HDN) – one of the busiest railway corridors in the country.

The fourth line will help decongest the corridor by separating port-bound freight traffic from the mainline, ensuring faster and more punctual operations for both passenger and Mail/Express trains. It will also support the smooth movement of more coaching trains between Khragpur to Bhubaneswar, and beyond.

Currently, the section experiences heavy congestion, which often leads to detention of trains. With the completion of this project, operational restrictions will be eased, enabling a more reliable and timely train schedule for the public.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Angul dated -15th July 2025 I, SANTOSH SAHOO, S/o - KANDARPA SAHOO permanent resident of Vill - Kanyabeda, PO - Kandasar , PS - Nalco Nagar, Dist. - Angul, declare that I have changed my name from SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU to SANTOSH SAHOO. Henceforth, I shall be known as SANTOSH SAHOO for all purpose. SANTOSH SAHOO

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before The Executive Magistrate, Badamba, Dated : 11/07/2025, I, Mithun Kumar Pradhan, S/o - Maneka Pradhan, Address : At - Pangali, P.O. - Pangali, Dist. - Kandhamal, Odisha - 762104, declare that I have changed the name of my son from Jashua Melvin to Jashua Melvin Pradhan. Henceforth, he shall be known as Jashua Melvin Pradhan for all purposes. Mithun Kumar Pradhan

LOST

I, Sarita Jayanti Samal, W/o - Sambit Kumar Nayak, R/o - Kadapata, Nalanga, Dist. - Bhadrak declares that while communicating between Acharya Vihar to Rupali Chhaka in Bhubaneswar, I have misplaced original sale deed bearing No.4208/ Dt.25.05.2009 of Mouza - Pokhariput, Khata No.81, PL-No.25 of Area Ac.o.067.5 Decs. If anyone finds it, please contact : 9437087251.

SC: Tribal woman has equal property rights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 17: The Supreme Court Thursday held that a tribal woman or her legal heirs would be entitled to an equal share in ancestral property.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Joymalya Bagchi said denying the woman heir a right in the property only exacerbated gender division and discrimination, which the law should ensure to weed out

“When applying the principle of justice, equity and good conscience, the courts have to be mindful of the above and apply this otherwise open-ended principle contextually,” the bench said.

The top court observed in the present case, if the views of the subordinate court were upheld, the woman and her successors would be denied a right to property on the basis of the absence of a positive assertion to such inheritance in custom.

“However, customs too, like the law, cannot remain stuck in time and others cannot be allowed to take refuge in customs or hide behind them to deprive others of their right,” it added.

The verdict came on an ap-



peal filed by the legal heirs of a woman belonging to a scheduled tribe. They sought partition of a property belonging to their maternal grandfather.

The trial court and the first appellate court dismissed the plea by the legal heirs saying their mother had no right in the property of her father.

It was held so for the reason that no evidence had been led to show that the children of a woman heir were also entitled to property.

A provision of the Hindu Succession Act lays down that the law of succession should not apply to the members of scheduled tribes unless the union of India, by notification in the official gazette, otherwise directs.

The provision stipulates that a daughter in a scheduled tribe community cannot legal-ly demand her share in the father's property. The top court's judgement said the issue also

Students walk a km daily for MDM as school lacks infra



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, July 17: Even as the government continues to spend crores on beautifying and renovating school campuses, ground realities remain grim in many state-run institutions.

A glaring example is the Bishnuguda Government High School under Pitamahal panchayat in Rayagada block and district, where students have to walk a kilometre daily braving the sun and rain to have their mid-day meals (MDM). They also face other hardships due to lack of basic facilities in the school.

The school, built in 2016-17 at a cost of ₹50 lakh under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), currently has strength of 85 students from Classes VIII to X.

However, poor quality construction and stalled development projects have left the school in a dilapidated state, headmistress Rashmibala Padhy alleged. The school has no drinking water supply and no proper seating arrangement for students to eat MDM, she said.

Students, irrespective of rain or heat, are forced to walk for a kilometre daily to a nearby primary school for lunch. Several classrooms have developed

cracks, while many have broken walls. The school's toilets lack running water, compelling students to go outside and relieve themselves in the open.

Initially, the school was selected under a transformation plan during the previous BJD government. Funds worth ₹45 lakh were allocated for upgrades. However, due to the absence of a registered land record (RoR), the funds were returned, halting all developmental works in the school and thereby depriving students of even minimum facilities.

Earlier, a borewell had been installed near the school, which could have resolved the water crisis. However, a local resident, who claims that the land is private, has encroached upon the land and fenced it. A laboratory building intended for science classes is no longer in use due to safety concerns owing to its rickety condition.

Though a sanitary napkin vending machine was installed for girl students, teachers said that it remained non-functional in the absence of a usable toilet on campus.

Despite repeated complaints by school authorities, only minor repairs have been carried out, the headmistress said.

4 arrested over student suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, July 17: Police arrested four employees of a private English Medium School at Champua in Keonjhar district in connection with the suicide of a Class X male student, Thursday.

The action came five days after the student identified as Krishna Pradhan jumped off the third floor of the hostel building and committed suicide at about 5.30am, July 12. He sustained critical injuries in the act.

School authorities rushed him to the Champua hospital where

The action came five days after the student identified as Krishna Pradhan jumped off the third floor of the hostel building

doctors pronounced him dead. Family members alleged that the boy was assaulted and tortured by the school authorities. The death of the boy sparked tension on school premises and hospital for over 10 hours.

involved the question of violation of Article 14 (equality before law) of the Constitution.

“There appears to be no rational nexus or reasonable classification for only males to be granted succession over the property of their forebears and not women, more so in the case where no prohibition to such effect can be shown to be prevalent as per law.”

The bench went on, “Article 15(1) states that the State shall not discriminate against any person on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. This, along with Articles 38 and 46, points to the collective ethos of the Constitution in ensuring that there is no discrimination against women.”

The top court said denying the mother her share in her father's property, when the custom was silent, would violate her right to equality vis-à-vis her brothers or those of her legal heirs vis-à-vis their cousin.

“Keeping with the principles of justice, equity and good conscience, read along with the overarching effect of Article 14 of the Constitution, the appellant-plaintiffs, being her legal heirs, are entitled to their equal share in the property,” it held.

PURI

STAMPEDE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 17: Altogether 147 people have so far recorded their statements as part of an administrative inquiry into the June 29 stampede in Puri district, where three persons were killed and around 50 others injured during this year's Rath Yatra, officials said Thursday.

These people recorded their statements before Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary Anu Garg, who is leading the administrative inquiry, they said.

During the last hearing, held at the Special Circuit House, Puri Wednesday, 42 people, including police personnel and staffers who were on duty June 29 and deployed at the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC), recorded their statements, the officials said.

Garg, who has been asked to submit a report by July 30, said,

Two held for ₹1.56cr online gaming fraud

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 17: The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Odisha police Thursday arrested two fraudsters on charges of duping a woman from Cuttack district of ₹1.56 crore on the pretext of higher returns in online gaming platforms.

The CID officials acted on a complaint filed by Mamata Rout, 38, a native of Balisahi village under Salipur police station in Cuttack, alleging that she was duped to the tune of ₹1.56 crore by the cyber fraudsters for wilful adoption of deceitful means and promise of high return on investment in different online gaming platforms, including world.net, bounty game, bitcoin staking opportunity, ride BNB, and HAHM, between February 2024 and February 2025.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the cyber crooks, Kamadev Rout, Bikram Kumar Jethi, and their associates, had assured the victim of a high-value return on investment and lured her to transfer ₹57,39,471 to 10 different bank accounts furnished by the accused persons. Besides the cash, ₹98,60,529 was also transferred by the victim to the accused persons on different dates, CID officials said.

On due analysis of the finan-



cial transactions of the victim and those of the accused persons, it was found ₹14,77,000 and ₹8,45,046 has been transferred to the accounts of accused Kamadev Rout and Bikram Kumar Jethi, respectively, during the reported period from the account of the complainant and her friend Ksharendra Kumar Sahoo.

The accused persons, Kamadev Rout and Bikram Kumar Jethi, with the intention to further extract money from the victim, contacted her over the phone and came down to Cuttack July 16 and 17, and were apprehended by the team of the CID of Crime Branch.

Electronic gadgets, including mobile phones of the accused persons, were seized. Preliminary investigation further reveals that the fraudsters have purchased several immovable properties, including land, vehicles, and gold ornaments, in Bhubaneswar and Jharkhand.

Woman Ayush doc dies due to ‘overdose’ of sleeping pills

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargaon, July 17: A woman Ayush doctor died after having overdose of sleeping pills at Runga village under this block in Sundargarh district late Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Dr Salila Panda, an Ayush doctor posted at the primary health centre in Runga village. Her husband Debabrata Mishra lodged a complaint at Bargaon police station alleging that his wife Salila died due to overdose of sleeping pills.

Police registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem. Police said that the actual reason behind her death could be ascertained only after post-mortem and an investigation, which will unravel whether she died due to overdose of sleeping pills or for some other reason.

Worker killed in accident at Rayagada rly stn yard

Rayagada: One worker was killed and two others were injured after a push trolley and a goods train got entangled at Rayagada railway station yard Thursday, officials said. In a statement, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) said, “Unfortunately, one contractual labourer got hit by the goods train and expired. Another labourer and one trolleyman sustained minor injuries. They are admitted to a nearby hospital and will be discharged after due medical attention.” The mishap occurred in the morning when the umbrella of a push trolley got entangled with a wagon of a moving goods train.

147 people record statements



“We have recorded statements of different stakeholders both in Bhubaneswar and Puri in four different sessions.”

Seventeen people attended the public hearings in Bhubaneswar, and three other sessions were held in Puri, where many others recorded their statements on the stampede incident which took place near the Shree Gundicha temple, she said.

The stampede took place

amid a massive rush of devotees early June 29 when three chariots of sibling deities were parked in front of Gundicha temple.

Garg started her inquiry the next day and has so far met servitors, police, public and other stakeholders for preparing her final report. She has visited the site where the stampede took place, an official said.

Immediately after the tragic incident, the state government

Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary Anu Garg met the suspended SP and Collector of Puri, and held discussions with senior officials of Jagannath Temple police and media persons

had placed the then collector and SP of Puri under suspension. Garg, during her inquiry, also met both the officers and held discussions with senior officials of Jagannath Temple Police (JTP) and media persons.

She sought video recording from media houses and the public, the official added.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	86.16 ▲ 0.16	SENSEX	82259.24 ▼ 375.24	GOLD	₹7,400 ▼ ₹388
EURO	99.87 ▼ 0.10	NIFTY	25111.45 ▼ 100.60	SILVER	₹111,981 ▲ ₹346

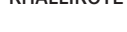
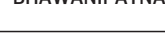
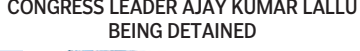
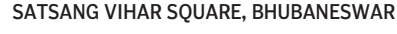
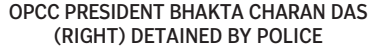
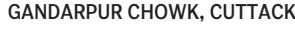
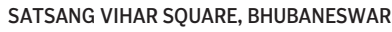
WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	33.2°	32.4°	Cloudy sky with possibility of rain
Min Temp	27.1°	26.6°	
Humidity	79%	83%	
Rainfall	Trace	0.6mm	

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The dawn-to-dusk 'Odisha Bandh' called by Opposition Congress and Left parties over the self-immolation death of a female student of FM (Autonomous) College, Balasore, allegedly due to sexual harassment by her HOD paralysed public transport and brought normal life to a grinding halt across the state. The bandh remained by and large peaceful, even as vehicular movement on major roads and highways were disrupted by the agitating Congress workers. The 12-hour bandh also affected train services at a dozen railway stations, as Congress workers resorted to 'rail roko'

The dawn-to-dusk 'Odisha Bandh' called by Opposition Congress and Left parties over the self-immolation death of a female student of FM (Autonomous) College, Balasore, allegedly due to sexual harassment by her HOD paralysed public transport and brought normal life to a grinding halt across the state. The bandh remained by and large peaceful, even as vehicular movement on major roads and highways were disrupted by the agitating Congress workers. The 12-hour bandh also affected train services at a dozen railway stations, as Congress workers resorted to 'rail roko'



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Bhubaneswar-751015, Tel: 0674-2362251/2362246,
Email: zo.bhubaneswar@bankoffindia.co.in

REQUIREMENT OF PREMISES

Bank of India requires suitable premises of 1250-1500 sqft. preferably on ground floor with appropriate frontage and sufficient parking space on lease basis for opening of New Branch in **Sundarpada**. The premises should be in an approved building conforming to the conditions by the Govt. Authorities for commercial use. Detailed notification inviting offers for new premises is available in our website www.bankoffindia.co.in. Prescribed format for submission of offer may be obtained up to **3.00 PM of 28.07.2025** from our office at above address. Alternatively, the format can be downloaded from our website. Last date for submission of offer is up to **4.00 PM on 28.07.2025** at Zonal Office, Bhubaneswar.

Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone



Imminent Indictment

Recent days have witnessed some of the worst attacks against Ukrainian civilians since the start of the war in February 2022. According to Danielle Bell, the head of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), “The surge in long-range missile and drone strikes across the country has brought even more death and destruction to civilians far away from the frontline.”

In fact, according to new data from the HRMMU, which has monitored loss of life throughout all of Russia’s major bombing offensives, the monthly casualty rate among Ukraine’s civilian population in June was the highest in more than three years. Civilian casualties included 232 deaths, with a further 1,343 Ukrainians injured in the span of one month.

As dire as conditions for civilians have become, the surge in Russian violence may also mark a turning point in Ukraine’s favour. US President Donald Trump has now signalled a shift in his position, which Ukrainians and their allies across the West hope will be sustained.

Trump’s decision to supply the type of lethal missiles (paid for by Europe) that will allow Ukraine to continue its fight against Russian aggression reflects his slow loss of trust in Russian President Vladimir Putin’s willingness to negotiate a peace agreement. Likewise, Trump’s accompanying threat to impose new sanctions comes in response to Putin’s failure to honour his promises.

Putin has another reason to worry. On 15 July, Ukraine’s parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of establishing, together with the Council of Europe, a special tribunal to try Russia for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. The Ukrainian decision ratifies the agreement that was signed in Strasbourg on 25 June, during Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s first visit to the Council of Europe.

An unmistakable signal has now been sent that there will be no safe haven for Putin and the clique who made the decision to wage aggressive war against Ukraine. The future tribunal will allow investigations of all the highest-ranking leaders of the Russian state. While heads of state, heads of governments and foreign ministers benefit from personal immunity from prosecution, this will be no bar to gathering evidence against them and being prepared to issue a formal indictment the instant they leave office.

The agreement follows the Council of Europe’s suspension of Russia’s representation rights in February 2022, after 26 years of Russian membership, and then expelling Russia a month later, in accordance with Article 8 of its statute.

The tribunal is the culmination of three years of pressure to hold the Kremlin accountable for its actions in Ukraine. Already the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia’s commissioner for children’s rights, for her role in the unlawful deportation of thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia. Last year ICC judges issued arrest warrants for former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the Russian General Staff of the Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov for attacks on Ukraine’s electricity infrastructure.

But a tribunal has become necessary because, despite having jurisdiction over war crimes, crimes against humanity (which now include the destruction of schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, and the deliberate targeting of civilians), and genocide committed on Ukraine’s territory, the ICC cannot prosecute Russia’s political and military leaders for the crime of aggression. This is because Russia is not a party to the Rome Statute, which established the ICC, and because the country’s veto power at the United Nations prevents the Security Council from referring the matter to the Court. That leaves only a special tribunal to prosecute Putin’s foundational crime: planning, preparing, and executing the invasion, occupation, and attempted annexation of Ukraine, dating back to the invasion of Crimea in 2014.

Prosecuting the regime for the crime of aggression against Ukraine falls squarely within the mission of the Council of Europe, founded in the aftermath of World War II, when much of the continent lay in ruins, with the goal of upholding the rule of law and human rights. It would also send the important message that a rules-based system is still the best way to create a more stable and peaceful world.

That message is needed now more than ever as Putin ramps up Russia’s war machine and increases the pressure not only on the front line in Ukraine but also on civilians. The Kremlin has reportedly imported labourers from Asian and African countries to bolster the workforce in factories manufacturing drones, with China accused of providing vital components in large quantities.

So, what has happened this week is of great significance. New American armaments will begin to arrive soon, and the message has gone out to Putin and his criminal cabal: criminal indictments are coming, and there will be nowhere to hide. Quite simply, there will be few places outside of Russia where Putin can be certain of not facing the humiliation of a potential arrest. His impunity is coming to an end.

The writer, a former prime minister of the United Kingdom, is UN Special Envoy for Global Education and Chair of Education Cannot Wait.

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WISDOM CORNER

“What’s money? A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and goes to bed at night and in between does what he wants to do.”

BOB DYLAN

“I firmly believe that any man’s finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle - victorious.”

VINCE LOMBARDI

“People, even more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed, and redeemed; never throw out anyone.”

AUDREY HEPBURN

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1902:** American mechanical engineer Willis Carrier completed drawings for what would become the first modern air conditioner.
- **1918:** Former Russian tsar Nicholas II and his family were executed by Bolsheviks.
- **1955:** Disneyland opens its doors for the first time. The popular theme park (“The Happiest Place on Earth”) was opened by Walt Disney in Anaheim, California.

FOCUS

POLITICS

POWER GAMES

Despite the misgivings in some quarters, the RSS knows Modi remains their best bet for now to retain political and ideological hegemony

In the Congress, we play out our faction fights in the public glare, the BJP does it behind closed doors,” laments a senior Congress leader. The Shashi Tharoor versus Congress saga in Kerala and the Siddaramaiah versus DK Shivakumar soap opera in Karnataka are fresh examples of the Congress propensity for scoring self-goals through public recrimination. By contrast, the power tussles within the BJP and intra-sangh parivar battles rarely get the same attention because the mikes are kept firmly out of the picture. Then be it the Amit Shah versus Yogi Adityanath turf war in UP or the BJP versus RSS wrangle that has delayed the announcement of a new BJP president for several months now, the warring doesn’t make headlines because of a fearful veil of silence in the ranks.

Which is one reason why RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat’s recent remarks advising public figures to step aside and ‘retire’ at 75 years have raised more than a few eyebrows. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will turn 75 in September as will ironically Bhagwat. The opposition has been quick to seize on the RSS leader’s comments, claiming that the saffron brotherhood’s paterfamilias wants to urgently effect a ‘succession plan’ in the BJP.

There is a story in my 2024 election book about PM Modi’s desire to stay in power at all costs. Apparently, as a young man when Modi worked briefly at his uncle’s canteen in Ahmedabad, he would take a state transport bus to and from his Vadnagar home. He would leave his jhola, or bag, behind in the bus to reserve a seat since the same bus would take him back to Vadnagar. Moral of the story? Once Modi has sat on a chair, no one can snatch it away from him! The story maybe apocryphal since it was related to me by a Gujarat Congress leader but the underlying message is clear: an instinctively domineering

figure, Modi is uncomfortable without total control over his destiny. Such larger than life figures are loathe to take a backseat, forget retirement.

At the same time, RSS chiefs usually weigh their words carefully so what explains Bhagwat’s sudden reference to the 75 years age limit? That a section of the Sangh has been desirous of a generational change within the BJP has been whispered in power corridors for a while. The underlying tug-of-war between BJP and RSS leaderships came to the fore in 2024 general election campaign when BJP president JP Nadra remarked in an interview to the Indian Express that the BJP has grown from the time it needed the RSS and is now ‘saksham’ (capable) of running its own affairs. Those remarks caused disquiet within the sangh parivar hierarchy, a reflection perhaps of a wider discomfort within the RSS of a political eco-system that revolves around the inexorable cult of Modi as a ‘God-like’ figure. Last September, Bhagwat appeared to reflect the inner angst when he declared, “Through work, everyone can become a revered figure. But whether we ourselves have reached that level will be determined by others, not by ourselves. We should not proclaim that we have become God!” The reference to the prime minister being projected as a self-styled ‘non-biological God’ was unmistakable.

And yet, despite the misgivings in some quarters, the RSS knows Modi remains their best bet for now to retain political and ideological hegemony. As the CSDS 2024 post-poll survey shows, Modi’s popularity is still well above that of the BJP. One in every four voters of the BJP said they voted for the party only because of the Prime Minister’s leadership. Take away the ‘Modi factor’ and the BJP looks far more vulnerable politically. He is the political mascot of Brand Hindutva, its commander-in-chief and star attraction. In a sense, we are in an age of ‘Moditva’ where a personality cult is suffused into religious majoritarianism. From a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya to Article 370 being withdrawn in J&K to now even attempts at pushing through a uniform civil code in BJP-ruled states, the Modi government has ensured the effective implementation of the RSS’s core agenda. In fact, the BJP’s political dominance gives the RSS the long-cherished opportunity to spread its footprint like never before, be it in university campuses, cultural fora or even newsrooms.

As a result, there has been a clear shift in the power dynamics within the sangh parivar. For much of its 100 years of existence, the RSS was the undisputed ideological fountainhead within the saffron brotherhood. The Modi decade has changed the rules of engagement. The

BJP still draws its support systems from the well-entrenched RSS grassroots structures but at a leadership level, it is now PM Modi – an RSS pracharak turned politician – and not sarsanghchalak Bhagwat who is ‘primus inter pares’ or first among equals. This is marked departure from the Vajpayee years for example when the RSS leadership would repeatedly snipe at an ageing prime minister leading a coalition government. Recall how then RSS chief, KS Sudarshan was openly contemptuous of Vajpayee’s decision-making, even urging him to step aside, a criticism that led to a piqued Vajpayee making his famous ‘tired, na retired’ remark.

In sharp contrast, Bhagwat knows that he cannot confront Modi directly. Floating a ‘retirement’ trial balloon is only an opening gambit, not a checkmate. Ironically, it was the Modi-Shah combine who in 2015 introduced the concept of a ‘Marg-Darshak Mandal’, a symbolic grouping of 75 year-plus party veterans like LK Advani and MM Joshi whom the Modi-Shah regime cut to size by pushing them into a permanent retirement abode. The RSS realizes it cannot force a ‘Marg Darshak’-like role upon PM Modi at this stage but it still would like the party to create a more consensual path for a younger post-Modi BJP leadership.

Post-script: Intriguingly, in the same week that Bhagwat was giving retirement advice, Shah was telling a group of women farmers in Ahmedabad, “I have decided that whenever I retire, I will spend the rest of my life for Vedas, Upanishads and natural farming.” The ultimate practitioner of ruthless power politics ‘retiring’ to farming? Not quite. Gujarat’s Jodi No. 1 one has thrived on absolute power in Gandhinagar and Delhi and they are in no mood to give up so easily. Age in the Modi-Shah political universe is only a number.

The writer is a senior journalist and author.

SPECTRUM

ECONOMY

Camouflaging inequality

The claim by government about India’s stature as the fourth most equal country in the world based on the World Bank’s Spring 2025 Poverty and Equity Brief is deceptive and camouflages the stark reality of poverty and inequality that plague India despite its high economic growth. At the same time, other international data shows significant disparities in areas like gender inequality, and economic participation and human development.

The inequality represented by Gini index ranges from 0 to 100, where zero represents perfect equality and 100 indicates extreme inequality. It is reported that India’s consumption Gini index which was 28.8 in 2011-12, has declined steadily to 25.5 in 2022-23, placing it in the “moderately low inequality” category ahead of China (35.7), and the US (41.8).

But it’s crucial to understand that these measures are not directly comparable across countries. What is camouflaged is that the Gini index of our “consumption” is compared to the Gini index of “income” of other countries. This is nothing but incomparable. The World Bank’s Poverty and Inequality Platform

(PIP) provides Gini indices for 104 countries based on consumption surveys and 73 countries based on income surveys.

Most countries in the PIP database that report consumption inequality are low income or low middle-income countries, whereas the reported Gini for most upper- and high-income countries is based on income. Further, the consumption-based Gini index tends to be lower than the income-based Gini because it doesn’t fully capture the income inequality, especially among higher earners who tend to save and invest more. Further richer sections of society smokescreen their consumption too. According to experts, typically, a consumption inequality Gini is 7-14 percentage points lower than the same population’s income inequality.

The Gini index for India has worsened over time, with its ranking dropping from 115 in 2009 to 176 in 2019 out of 216 countries, suggesting a considerable level of income disparity within the country. More importantly, income inequality in the country rose from a Gini of 52 in 2004 to 62 in 2023. This actually places India as the

second most unequal country after South Africa. This inequality is massive, when we compare our wealth inequality, where our Gini index for wealth has increased from 0.70 in 2000 to 0.75 in 2023. Wage disparity remained high, with the median earnings of the top 10% being 13 times higher than the bottom 10% in 2023-24.

Recently, none other than Union minister Nitin Gadkari expressed concern over the rising number of poor people and concentration of wealth. India has more inequality than other countries and remarkably less equality of opportunity than almost any other country. The gap between rich and poor has widened rapidly in the last decades especially in the post-liberalization period with the income of the top 10% skyrocketing. According to the World Inequality report 2022 released in December 2021, India stands out as a “poor and very unequal country, with an affluent elite.”

The grim reality is that a working paper, titled “Income and Wealth Inequality in India, 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj,” by World Inequality Lab has estimated that

“inequality declined post-independence till the early 1980s, after which it began rising and has skyrocketed since the early 2000s.” Between 2014-15 and 2022-23, the rise of top-end inequality has been particularly pronounced in terms of wealth concentration.

In Oxfam’s 2024 Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index (CRI), India ranks 127th out of 161 countries down from 123rd out of 161 countries in 2022. Our regressive tax system penalises honest taxpayers while benefits the rich and corporations. According to another Oxfam report, most billionaire wealth is taken, not earned – 60% comes from inheritance, cronyism and corruption or monopoly power. India’s unique demographic shift is fuelling rapid expansion of family offices and it is estimated \$1.3 trillion in wealth is set for intergenerational transfer over the next decade. Hence, it is imperative for the government to impose wealth and inheritance taxes and spend more on health and education.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

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

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

A rare admission

Sir, Hats off to Lt Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha, for taking full responsibility for the Pahalgam killings. In an interview to a leading newspaper, the LG, without any ifs and buts, took it on the chin – “Pahalgam was a security lapse, I take full responsibility for it.” We live in times when the political class has become synonymous with vice, corruption and all manner of wrongdoing. Our politicians have very thick skins and know how to wriggle out of an uncomfortable situation. Their arsenal of lies, baseless arguments and whataboutery always comes to their rescue and bails them out. It’s not surprising therefore, that no politician has taken the moral responsibility for heinous crimes against women (in government campuses), unruly behaviour, rail accidents, collapsed bridges, the pathetic condition of our roads, hospitals or government run schools. (I am not mentioning corruption here, because it is now a part and parcel of India’s socio-political culture). A fact that sticks out like a sore thumb is that neither the PM nor our HM have so far tendered an apology to the nation for the Pahalgam terror attack that claimed the lives of 26 innocent Indians..

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)

Stellar return

Sir, The safe return of Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and his fellow astronauts from the Axiom-4 mission is a proud moment for India and a big step forward in our space ambitions. This successful mission has given India not just glory but also valuable lessons and experience in human spaceflight. We must appreciate the teamwork of Axiom Space, SpaceX, and ISRO in ensuring both mission success and astronaut safety. Shukla’s presence on the International Space Station (ISS) shows how international collaborations can benefit India’s future space missions, especially Gaganyaan. Now, it is important that ISRO uses this momentum to build strong training, rehabilitation, and research programmes. Insights from this mission will help India plan safe, efficient, and longer manned missions in the future. Let us keep aiming high, learning more, and preparing better as we take our next giant leap in space exploration.

Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI

In the three to ten lakh population category under 'Swachh Shahr', Mira-Bhayandar has secured the first position while Bilaspur and Jamshedpur followed it in the next two spots.

Madhya Pradesh's Dewas has bagged the first position in the 50,000 to three lakh population category and Karhad in Maharashtra and Karnal in Haryana ranked second and third respectively.

of the day

quote

The people of America need this technology, and you need to have it in your arsenal

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE



The doors of a new powerful Turkey have been flung wide open

TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT, TURKEY



Schmidt does not have the right to make decisions and everything he does is breaking Bosnia and Herzegovina down

MILORAD DODIK | PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIKA SRPSKA



SHORT TAKES

UK, Germany sign friendship treaty

London: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz signed a landmark treaty Thursday that pledges to tighten defence ties and boost law-enforcement cooperation against criminal people-smuggling gangs using the English Channel. Starmer has made it a priority of his centre-left Labour Party to curb the gangs behind cross-Channel people smuggling. Berlin agreed last year to make facilitating the smuggling of migrants to the UK a criminal offence, a move that will give law enforcement more powers to investigate the supply and storage of small boats to be used for the crossings. Merz is expected to commit to adopting the law change by the end of the year. The treaty builds on a defence pact the UK and Germany, two of the biggest European supporters of Ukraine, signed last year pledging closer co-operation against a growing threat from Russia.

France withdraws troops from Senegal

Dakar (Senegal): The French military completed its withdrawal from Senegal Thursday, its last West African country with a permanent troop presence, amid waning regional influence in recent years. France has faced opposition from leaders of some of its former colonies in Africa over what they described as a demeaning and heavy-handed approach to the continent. The French military handed over Camp Geille, its largest base in Senegal, along with a nearby air facility, to the Senegalese government during a ceremony in the capital, Dakar. General Pascal Ianni, head of French forces in Africa, said the handover marked a new phase in military ties. “It is part of France’s decision to end permanent military bases in West and Central Africa, and responds to the Senegalese authorities’ desire to no longer host permanent foreign forces on their territory,” he said.

Israeli strikes kill 27 in Gaza

Cairo/Jerusalem: Israeli forces killed at least 27 people in attacks in the Gaza Strip Thursday, including three people who died in a strike on a church that late Pope Francis used to speak to regularly, medics and church officials said. Eight men tasked with protecting aid trucks were reported among the dead in airstrikes that were carried out while mediators continued cease-fire talks in Doha. A US official said this week the talks were going well but two officials from the Palestinian militant group Hamas told Reuters there had been no breakthrough as the Israeli military continued to pummel Gaza.



I hope to be able to meet you again, in a few months, to take part in the ecumenical commemoration of the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea

POPE LEO | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

‘RAIN EMERGENCY’ DECLARED IN PAK

Torrential monsoon rains claimed 30 lives in Pakistan’s Punjab over the last 24 hours, prompting the provincial government to declare “rain emergency” in different parts. The most affected area was Chakwal, a salt range area of the province, some 300 kms from Lahore, receiving 423 mm of rain in the last 24 hours leading to floods in the area



14 detained after deadly clashes; 22-hr curfew in Bangladesh



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, July 17: Military troops, paramilitary forces and riot police Thursday patrolled the thoroughfares in Gopalganj, the home town of Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to ensure a 22-hour curfew after 14 people were detained following clashes that left four dead.

Military soldiers in battle gear hoisting red flags in armoured personnel carriers were moving throughout the south-western Gaopalganj town where residents were forced to stay indoors, businesses were shut and transport off the roads after Wednesday’s violence, officials said.

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

“A tense calm has gripped Gopalganj,” a local journalist said over phone from the town, about 160 kilometres southwest of Dhaka.

Police said they have so far detained 14 people overnight for their alleged involvement in violent clashes but no case was filed in the incident as yet.

“The joint forces handed over the 14 individuals to us,” Abdullah Al Mamun, inspector (investigation) of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station, was quoted as saying by local media.

Filing of cases is underway, he added

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus’ office said a 22-hour curfew has been ordered from 8 pm Wednesday for Gopalganj, adding the perpetrators of the attack on the NCP would not go unpunished.

Myanmar’s military govt recaptures strategic town

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bangkok, July 17: Myanmar’s military has recaptured a strategic gateway town from rebel forces after nearly a year, state-media reported Thursday, marking a rare turnaround in the country’s northeast, where an alliance of ethnic militias seized a large swath of territory in an offensive that began in late 2023.

Nawngkhio, which sits on a major highway trading route linking central Myanmar to China, had been under the control of the Ta’ang National Liberation Army, or TNLA, a group in the Three Brotherhood

Alliance, since July last year.

Its recapture by the army comes after a long period where the military government had been seen as being on the defensive against an array of rebel forces in the civil war that is being fought over much of the country.

Nawngkhio, which also stands on the highway leading to the major military garrison town of Pyin Oo Lwin, was completely captured by the army at noon on Wednesday after nearly 11 months of operations to retake the town, according to a state-run Myanmar Alinn newspaper report Thursday.

Ukraine appoints new govt in biggest wartime overhaul

REUTERS

Kyiv, July 17: Ukraine’s parliament appointed the country’s first new prime minister in five years Thursday, part of a major cabinet overhaul aimed at revitalising wartime management as prospects for peace with Russia grow dim.

Yulia Svyrydenko, 39, has been tasked by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy with boosting domestic weapons production and reviving Ukraine’s loan-dependent economy.

In a speech to parliament, Zelenskyy said he expected his

new government to increase the share of domestic weapons on Ukraine’s battlefield to 50% from 40% within six months.

He also singled out deregulation and expanding economic co-operation with allies as other key aims of the biggest government reshuffle since Russia’s February 2022 invasion.

Svyrydenko, an experienced technocrat who had served as first deputy prime minister since 2021, pledged to move “swiftly and decisively”.

“War leaves no room for delay,” she wrote on X.

“Our priorities for the first six



months are clear: reliable supply for the army, expansion of domestic weapons production, and boosting the technological strength of our defense forces.”

Svyrydenko is also well known to the Trump admin-

Ukraine gets first new prime minister of the war

Svyrydenko tasked with strengthening arms sector, shaping up economy

Zelenskyy aims to raise domestic share of weapons on battlefield

Cabinet overhaul seeks to revitalise wartime management

istration, having negotiated a deal giving the US preferential access to Ukraine’s mineral wealth. It was considered crucial to bolstering relations between Kyiv and Washington.

Addressing lawmakers

Syria’s Sharaa vows to protect Druze rights

REUTERS

Damascus, July 17: Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa accused Israel of trying to fracture Syria and promised to protect its Druze minority Thursday, after US intervention helped end deadly fighting between government forces and Druze fighters in the south.

Overnight, the Islamist-led government’s troops withdrew from the predominantly Druze city of Sweida, where scores of people have been killed in days of conflict pitting Druze fighters against government troops and Bedouin tribes.

One local journalist said he’d counted more than 60 bodies in the streets of Sweida Thursday morning. Ryan Marouf of Suwayda24 told Reuters he had found a family of 12 people killed in one house, including women and an elderly man.

Violence in Syria escalated sharply Wednesday as Israel launched airstrikes in Damascus, while also hitting government forces in the south, demanding they withdraw and saying Israel aimed to protect Syrian Druze - part of a small but influential minority that also has followers in Lebanon and Israel.

Israel, which bombed Syria frequently under the rule of ousted President Bashar al-Assad, has struck the country repeatedly this year, describing its new leaders as barely disguised jihadists and saying it will not allow them to deploy



forces in areas of southern Syria near its border.

Addressing Syrians Thursday, interim President Sharaa accused Israel of seeking to “dismantle the unity of our people”, saying it had “consistently targeted our stability and created discord among us since the fall of the former regime”.

Sharaa, who was commander of an al Qaeda faction before cutting ties with the group in 2016, said protecting Druze citizens and their rights was “our priority” and rejected any attempt to drag them into the hands of an “external party”.

He also vowed to hold to account those who committed violations against “our Druze people”. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel had established a policy demanding the demilitarisation of a swathe of territory near the border, stretching from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to the Druze Mountain, east of Sweida.

Syria had sent “its army south of Damascus into an area that was supposed to remain demilitarized, and it began massacring Druze. This was something we could not accept in any way,” he said.



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian Thursday said, “China-Russia-India cooperation not only serves the respective interests of the three countries but also helps uphold peace, security, stability and progress in the region and the world”.

China stands ready to maintain communication with Russia and India on advancing the trilateral cooperation, he said.

The Russian and Chinese interests in the revival of the RIC followed the recent visit of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to China to take part in the SCO Foreign Ministers meeting, during which he held talks with top Chinese officials, including Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. Jaishankar’s recent trip

came after the visits of NSA Ajit Doval and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to China.

Lavrov said in May that Russia, which shares close ties with India and China, is “genuinely interested” in the revival of the RIC format.

He said the trilateral mechanism initiated by Russia’s former prime minister Yevgeny Primakov resulted in 20 meetings between the three countries at various levels.

A host of issues, including the growing rivalry between India and China and Beijing’s persistent backing of its all-weather ally Pakistan in its anti-India acts, diluted the RIC’s relevance and importance. Of late, there is increasing Russian and Chinese interest in the revival of RIC as India has become a member of Quad.



General view of the peloton in action during stage 9 of the Tour de France

REUTERS

Britain to lower voting age to 16 to restore ‘public trust’ in democracy

The move will bring UK-wide elections in line with the devolved Scotland and Wales regions as part of what the British government described as one of the biggest changes to UK democracy in a generation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, July 17: The UK government Thursday announced that it will lower the voting age from 18 to 16 years in time for the next general election expected in 2029, a manifesto commitment made by the Labour Party when it was voted last year.

The move will bring UK-wide elections in line with the devolved Scotland and Wales regions as part of what the

British government described as one of the biggest changes to UK democracy in a generation.

The plans also include an expansion of the voter ID system to permit the use of UK-issued bank cards as an accepted form of ID at polling stations, to ensure eligible voters are not “deterred from voting”.

“For too long, public trust in our democracy has been damaged and faith in our institutions has been allowed to decline,” said UK Deputy Prime



Minister Angela Rayner, marking the release of a strategy paper that sets in motion plans to lower the voting age.

“We are modernising our democracy, so that it is fit for

the 21st century. By delivering our manifesto commitment to extend the vote to 16 and 17 year olds, we are taking a generational step forward in restoring public trust and boosting

engagement in UK democracy, supporting our Plan for Change,” said Rushanara Ali, Minister for Democracy in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The new strategy covers the creation of a new digital “Voter Authority Certificate” to ensure Electoral Registration Officers can meet the digital needs of voters, reduce printing costs and ensure faster delivery.

An increasingly automated voter registration system is intended to make it easier for people to register to vote and reduce the need to fill out their details across different government services on multiple occasions.

In order to boost transparency and accountability in

politics, the MHCLG said it will also be closing loopholes that may allow foreign donors via “shell companies” to influence UK political parties.

Meanwhile, new requirements on unincorporated associations will mandate checks on donations over GBP 500 to tackle foreign interference and protect UK democracy from those who attempt to undermine it.

“We cannot take our democracy for granted, and by protecting our elections from abuse and boosting participation, we will strengthen the foundations of our society for the future,” added Rayner.

The changes will form part of an elections bill to be tabled in Parliament, besides secondary legislation to address the implementation schedule.

of the day

quote

Over the past five years, AIF commitments and investments have seen a 30 per cent Compounded Annual Growth Rate, heartening signs for capital formation

ANANTH NARAYAN | SEBI WHOLE-TIME MEMBER

Not only the foundation stone for Vidarbha first Integrated Steel Plant is being laid at Konsari in Gadchiroli district, but also a step is being taken towards seeing the historic dream turning into a reality

B PRABHAKARAN | LMEL, MD

The strong dollar index kept rupee weak while fall in Asian currencies also did not help as rupee continued to depreciate towards 86 levels

ANIL KUMAR BHANSALI | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FINREX TREASURY ADVISORS LLP

Q1 RESULTS

Axis Bank profit down

New Delhi: Axis Bank Thursday reported a 4 per cent decline in net profit at ₹5,806 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, 2025, due to a marginal increase in bad loans. The private sector bank had earned a standalone profit of ₹6,035 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. The total income rose to ₹38,322 crore during the June quarter of 2025-26, from ₹35,844 crore in the same quarter of FY25, Axis Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest earned by the bank grew to ₹31,064 crore as compared to ₹30,061 crore in the June quarter of FY25.

Wipro profit rises

New Delhi: IT major Wipro Thursday reported a 9.8 per cent increase in consolidated profit after tax at ₹3,336.5 crore during the June quarter. It had posted a profit after tax of ₹3,036.6 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said in a regulatory filing. The consolidated revenue from operations of Wipro was up marginally to ₹22,134.6 crore during the April-June period from ₹21,963.8 crore in the year-ago period. It expects revenue from its IT services segment to be in the range of USD 2,560 million to USD 2,612 million in the September quarter.

Nuvoco Vistas profit rises

Mumbai: Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd., a leading building materials Company in India, announced its financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2025. With 25 MMTPA of combined installed capacity, the Company is on track to achieve approx. 31 MMTPA cement capacity by Q3 FY27. The Company achieved a consolidated cement sales volume of 5.1MMT in Q1 FY26. Consolidated revenue from operations grew 9 per cent YoY to ₹2,873cr in Q1 FY26. The Company also reported its highest-ever first quarterly consolidated EBITDA of ₹533cr in Q1 FY26. Furthermore, the Company remained committed to its deleveraging agenda, reducing like-for-like' net debt by ₹884cr YoY to ₹3,474cr.

HDFC AMC profit jumps

New Delhi: HDFC Asset Management Company (AMC) Thursday reported a 24 per cent jump in profit after tax at ₹748 crore in the three months ended June 2025. In comparison, the asset management firm had posted a Profit After Tax (PAT) of ₹604 crore in the same quarter preceding fiscal. The company's revenue from operations increased 25 per cent to ₹968 crore in the first quarter ended June 30, 2025, from Rs 775.2 crore in the same quarter preceding fiscal year, HDFC AMC said in a regulatory filing to the stock exchanges.



With a 100 per cent share in the Special Economic Zone (SEEPZ) contributing a significant share (around 13 per cent) to India's gem and jewellery exports, the availability of a dedicated hand carriage facility just minutes away will enable faster clearances

DNYANESHWAR R PATIL | DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER, SEEPZ-SEZ

TARIFF THREAT

No worry over Russian sanctions: Hardeep Puri

India is also increasing the hunt for finding new deposits of oil within the country and quickly bringing them to production to deduce oil dependency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 17: India Thursday played down the threat of US imposing sanctions on countries buying Russian oil, saying it is confident of meeting its needs from alternative sources.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the world's third largest oil importer should be able to deal with any problems with Russian imports by seeking supplies from other 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 supplies from West Asia. Russia now accounts for as much as 40 per cent of India's oil imports.

Speaking at the Urja Varta annual conference of the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), Puri said there are many new suppliers coming onto the market such as Guyana and supplies can also be ramped up from existing producers such as Brazil and Canada.

"I don't feel any pressure in my mind. India has diversified the sources of supply," he said in reply to a question on the impact of US threatening Russia with sanctions.

Earlier this week, US President Donald Trump had threatened that countries purchasing

Russian exports could face sanctions or steep tariffs if Moscow fails to reach a peace agreement with Ukraine within 50 days.

Puri said India is also increasing the hunt for finding new deposits of oil within the country and quickly bringing them to production.

"I'm not worried at all. If something happens, we'll deal with it," he said. "India has diversified the sources of supply and we have gone, I think, from about 27 countries that we used to buy from to about 40 countries now."

In the event of Russian supplies being hit, Indian Oil Corp chairman AS Sahney said the country could "go back to the same template (of supplies) as was used pre-Ukraine crisis when Russian supplies to India were below 2 per cent."

The Oil Minister said prior to February 2022, India was buying 0.2 per cent of overall crude oil from Russia. "Today... It has gone up considerably," he said.

Addressing a press conference, Puri said at present the market does not react to geopolitical turmoil, especially in terms of prices as much as there is good availability of oil.

Addressing a press conference, he said at present, the price of crude oil is around \$68.5 per barrel and it is expected to remain around the same levels in the months to come.

"I think it will be somewhere around \$65/barrel," he said.

TATA ELECTRONICS, BOSCH SIGN PACT

Electronics manufacturer Tata Electronics has signed a pact with German technology firm Robert Bosch GmbH to collaborate on several key areas within the electronics and semiconductor industries, the Indian technology firm said Thursday. The memorandum of understanding intends to collaborate on chip packaging and manufacturing at Tata Electronics' upcoming assembly and test unit in Assam and foundry in Gujarat. Both companies will also identify and pursue local projects within electronic manufacturing services for vehicles



Perplexity Pro free access for Airtel users

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 17: Bharti Airtel has partnered with AI-powered search engine Perplexity (the AI-powered search and answer engine that offers real-time responses to users in a conversational language) to offer 12-month Perplexity Pro premium subscription free of cost to its 360 million customers.

The move assumes significance as it marks Perplexity's first partnership with an Indian telecom company. It comes at a time when NVIDIA-backed Perplexity is positioning itself to challenge the dominance of Alphabet.

Perplexity has a free offering with search features but the Pro version provides advanced capabilities for professionals and heavy users.

Perplexity Pro includes more daily Pro searches per user, access to advanced AI models (like GPT 4.1, Claude) and the ability to select specific models, deep research, image generation, file uploads and analysis, as well as Perplexity Labs.

The Pro subscription, worth Rs 17,000, is now available for free, for all Airtel customers (Mobile, Wi-Fi and DTH) for one year, according to a release. Airtel users can avail this offer by logging on to the Airtel Thanks App.

Gopal Vittal, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Bharti Airtel, said, "This collaboration will bring the powerful and real-time knowledge tool for millions of users at their fingertips, at no extra cost. This first-of-its-kind Gen-AI partnership in India is focused on helping our customers navigate the emerging trends in the digital world with confidence and ease."

Markets close lower



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 17: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty settled lower Thursday following selling in IT and banking shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 375.24 points or 0.45 per cent to settle at 82,259.24. During the day, it fell by 415.21 points or 0.50 per cent to 82,219.27.

The 50-share NSE Nifty closed lower by 100.60 points or 0.40 per cent to 25,111.45.

Fresh foreign fund outflows and subdued quarterly earnings dented investors' sentiment, experts said.

Among Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra declined nearly 3 per cent after its June quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. Infosys, HCL Tech, Eternal, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services and Axis Bank were also among the laggards.

However, Tata Steel, Trent, Titan and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional In-

vestors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,858.15 crore Wednesday. The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.30 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.07 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT tanked 1.47 per cent, followed by IT (1.33 per cent), teck (1.06 per cent), bankex (0.51 per cent) and utilities (0.25 per cent).

Realty jumped 1.22 per cent, metal climbed 0.62 per cent, commodities (0.42 per cent), healthcare (0.28 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.25 per cent).

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

European markets were trading higher. US markets ended higher Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.06 per cent to \$68.49 a barrel.

BYJU's founder to file over \$2.5bn suit against Glas Trust, others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 17: Beleaguered edtech firm BYJU's founders, Byju Raveendran and Divya Gokulnath, are gearing up to file an over \$2.5 billion suit against Glas Trust and others for damage to their reputation and business, a statement from their counsel said Thursday.

The founders are preparing to sue Glas Trust and others in India as well as in foreign countries, according to the statement.

BYJU's founders reserve all rights to bring actions against those parties that have caused damage to them personally and their businesses, including Think & Learn. The conduct before the Courts by Alpha, Glas Trust and its counsel has been reprehensible and improper in our view. We reserve the right to use all legal means to obtain justice for BYJU's founders, Lazareff Le Bars Eurl, Senior Litigation Advisor, J Michael McNutt, said in a statement.

The counsel said claims have already been raised in India against Glas Trust, the former subsidiary of Think & Learn, that Glas Trust now claims to control and other parties.

SEBI to extend tenure of derivatives contracts

REUTERS

Mumbai, July 17: India is looking to improve the quality of the derivatives market by extending the tenure and maturity of such contracts, an official at the markets regulator said in a speech Thursday.

"We must look for further ways to further deepen our cash equities markets, even as we look to improve the quality of our derivatives market by extending the tenure and maturity of the products and solutions on offer," said Ananth Narayan, a whole-time member at the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

Narayan did not provide details on the possible extension of the tenure of these contracts.

The surge in derivatives trading, which has also been driven by retail investors, has prompted the SEBI to limit the number of contract expiries and increase lot sizes to make such trades more expensive.

Earlier this month, SEBI barred US securities trading company Jane Street from the local market until further or-



India is exploring measures to strengthen its cash equities markets while also aiming to enhance the quality of the derivatives market by extending the duration and maturity of contracts

ders, and seized \$567 million of its funds, saying an investigation found it manipulated stock indexes through positions taken in derivatives.

"Short-term contracts dominate our equity derivatives volumes," Narayan said.

He said that these contracts detract from capital formation. SEBI's research shows that 91

per cent of individual traders incurred net losses trading in futures and options in fiscal 2025.

Highlighting the imbalance between cash markets and derivatives, Narayan said that on expiry days, comparable turnover in index options can exceed the cash market by over 350 times.

Kinetic Green, Tonino Lamborghini to enter e-carts biz

New Delhi: Kinetic Green Thursday joined hands with Italy's Tonino Lamborghini to roll out golf and lifestyle carts for global markets with expectations to corner a \$1 billion turnover over the next decade. The Pune-based electric vehicle maker will hold 70 per cent stake in the joint venture firm -- Kinetic Green Tonino Lamborghini (KGT), with the Italian firm holding the rest of the 30 per cent stake. Kinetic Green Founder and CEO Sulajja Firdia Motwani said the JV is eyeing 10 per cent market share of the electric cart business globally over the next ten years. Besides, there are various family offices that want to invest in the business, she said, adding that it could be in the range of \$10 million. The global market for electric carts is around 5 lakh units per annum, with US being the biggest market, followed by Europe and Asia. Usually, electric carts come with a driving range of 80-150 km and are priced between \$10,000 and \$14,000 per unit. In India, around 1,500 units are sold yearly. Kinetic Green's aim is to build a \$1 billion EV business by 2030. The JV will produce electric carts at Kinetic Green's Pune-based production facility. The JV will roll out the electric carts in two trims - Genesis and Prestige - with prices ranging between \$10,000 and \$18,000 per unit.

Govt begins formulation of Automotive Mission Plan 2047

Automotive Mission Plan 2047 aims to make India a leader in the automotive industry. The primary focus is on innovation and sustainability, involves collaboration of government, private players and academia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 17: The government has initiated the formulation of the Automotive Mission Plan 2047 (AMP 2047), a strategic road map aligned with the "Viksit Bharat @2047" vision

to establish India as a global automotive leader, focusing on innovation and sustainability, the Ministry of Heavy Industries said Thursday.

Sub-committees for AMP 2047 have held a meeting to outline objectives and framework and targets for sectoral growth, exports and industry advancement, to help increase India's share in global automotive trade.

Seven sub-committees, comprising experts from government, industry, and academia, will guide the development of a comprehensive plan targeting milestones for 2030, 2037, and 2047.

"The vision for 2047 is not an aspiration but a strategic road map backed by concrete targets for sector growth, exports, and industry advancement. We must think



beyond specific technologies or companies and focus on India's global standing in 2047, aiming to increase our share in global automotive trade through innovation and quality," Additional Secretary in

the Heavy Industries Ministry Hanif Qureshi said.

The initiative involves various ministries, industry bodies (SIAM, ACMA, CII), academia, and testing agencies for an industry-led effort.

"The Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and with the guidance of Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel HD Kumaraswamy has initiated the formulation of the Automotive Mission Plan 2047 (AMP 2047), a strategic roadmap aligned with the "Viksit Bharat @2047" vision. The inaugural meeting of the AMP 2047 Sub-Committees was held to outline the objectives and framework," an official statement said.

AMP 2047 seeks to integrate the collective vision of stakeholders, including Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), auto component manufacturers, policy-makers, academia and end users, to address challenges like technological advancements and charging

infrastructure, the Heavy Industries Ministry stated.

The meeting was attended by representatives from various ministries, including the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, DPIIT, Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change and industry bodies such as SIAM, ACMA, and CII, FICCI, academic institutions, research think tanks and testing agencies.

The AMP 2016-2026 (AMP 2026) is aimed at bringing the Indian Automotive Industry among the top three of the world in engineering, manufacture and exports of vehicles & components; growing in value to over 12 per cent of India's GDP and generating an additional 65 million jobs.

FREESTYLE CHESS

Pragg makes Carlsen resign



The Indian No 1 stuns World No 1, takes joint lead in Freestyle Chess Grand Slam; Carlsen out of title contention

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Las Vegas, July 17: Grand-master R Praggnanandhaa took down world number one Magnus Carlsen en route the top-bracket quarterfinals along with Arjun Erigaisi at the \$750,000 Freestyle Grand Slam Tour here. Praggnanandhaa continued the recent trend of Indian players outsmarting Carlsen and sent the Norwegian's campaign haywire Wednesday. Carlsen has in recent weeks also been beat-

en by reigning world champion D Gukesh, who is not competing here. The 19-year-old Praggnanandhaa was in his elements as he effectively deployed his pieces right from the word go and even though Carlsen got some chances, Praggnanandhaa crashed through with some imaginative manoeuvres. The loss against Praggnanandhaa had such a cascading effect on Carlsen that he lost another game against Wesley So in the next round and was shockingly eliminated from the top bracket by Levon Aronian of United States 2-0 in the final tiebreaker for the fourth spot that ensued. The 16-player event was divided into two groups of eight each and the top four from each pool advanced to the quarterfinals after playing once with each of the other participant.

Career-defining play

The 19-year-old dismantled the Norwegian great in just 39 moves, reinforcing his rising stature on the global chess stage and continuing a troubling trend for Carlsen against India's new generation of stars

Playing with the white pieces, Praggnanandhaa controlled the game from start to finish, registering a remarkable accuracy of 93.9%, compared to Carlsen's unusually low 84.9%

The victory not only gave him the sole lead in Group White at the time, but also added another chapter to his growing legacy-having now defeated Carlsen across all three major time formats: Classical, Rapid, and Blitz

The rules have been framed in such a way that those who do not make the top bracket in the first set of

I like Freestyle more than Classical right now
R PRAGGNANANDHAA | INDIAN GRANDMASTER

qualifiers can no longer win the event and Carlsen can at best finish third if he wins the remaining matches. Erigaisi was the other Indian from the second group who made it to the quarterfinals. It was a fine come-from-behind performance by Erigaisi, who faced some initial struggles. Praggnanandhaa tied for the first spot on 4.5 points out of a possible seven in his group with Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov and Javokhir Sandarov, along with Aronian, finishing on four points. Carlsen ended fifth ahead of Vincent Keymer of Germany, Wesley So and lone woman participant Bibisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan. In the second group christened black, Hikaru Nakamura topped the standings with an astonishing 6/7 with his American country-man Hans Niemann finishing second on 4.5 points. Erigaisi finished tied third on four points with another local star Fabiano Caruana. Another American trio of Leinier Dominguez Perez, Sevian Samuel and Robson Ray finished 5-7 in the second group with Indian Vidit Gujrathi ending on the last spot. In the Quarterfinals now, Praggnannadhaa will meet Fabiano Caruana of United States while Erigaisi will have to tackle Abdusattorov.

SHORT TAKES

Biles wins two ESPYS

Los Angeles: Simone Biles won two trophies at the ESPYS on Wednesday night, including the women's best athlete award. The 11-time Olympic medalist claimed the night's first award, best championship performance for her efforts at the Paris Games. She won three golds and a silver while helping the U.S. women's gymnasts win their first team title since 2016. "That was very unexpected, especially in a category of all men," Biles said after kissing husband, Chicago Bears safety Jonathan Owens.

Messi's streak ends

Cincinnati: Lionel Messi's MLS-record streak of scoring multiple goals in five straight matches ended Wednesday night in Inter Miami's 3-0 loss to FC Cincinnati. Cincinnati got a first-half goal from Gerardo Valenzuela and two second-half strikes from Evander to remain one point behind the Philadelphia Union in the Eastern Conference standings. Philadelphia beat CF Montreal 2-1 Wednesday night. Messi is the first player in MLS history to have a multi-goal streak of more than four matches. He was tied for the league lead with 16 goals in 17 MLS matches.

Olivia scripts history

London: Canada forward Olivia Smith has become the most expensive signing in women's football history by completing a one million pound move to Arsenal from Liverpool. Olivia joins the Arsenal on a long-term contract and will wear the number 15 jersey. "It's a privilege and an honour to sign for Arsenal. It's my dream to compete for the biggest titles here in England and in Europe and I'm excited to get started and contribute to doing that here with Arsenal. The atmosphere the supporters create at Emirates Stadium is incredible and I can't wait to have that behind me now," she said. The 20-year-old ended the 2023/24 campaign as the Player of the Season and Young Player of the Season, with her reputation cemented as one of the most highly rated young players in the game.

1st WODI: Deepti powers India to four-wicket victory over Eng

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Southampton, July 17: Deepti Sharma showed enormous composure with an unbeaten half century that powered India to a comfortable four-wicket victory in the opening women's ODI against England here. The dress rehearsals for India's 50-over World Cup started in earnest as a target of 259 was chased with 10 balls to spare, courtesy Deepti's unbeaten 62 off 64 balls with three boundaries and a six. Her 90-run fifth wicket stand in 14.2 overs with Jemimah Rodrigues (48 off 54 balls) proved to be the match-winning one. All-rounder Amanjot Kaur (20 off 14 balls) provided the finishing touches with some meaty blows as the target was achieved with minimum fuss despite India being reduced to 124 for 4 after the fall of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's (17) wicket. Deepti and Rodrigues took over and farmed the



strike well as they kept the scoreboard ticking and also hit the occasional boundaries whenever loose deliveries were provided. Deepti, whose slog over batting has always come in for a lot of flak, was brilliant in planning the chase. The shot of the match certainly was her one-handed six off Lauren Bell over deep mid-wicket. She effortlessly picked a length ball from outside the off-stump and dispatched it over deep mid-wicket with her bottom hand coming off the handle.

JAPAN OPEN

INDIA'S CAMPAIGN ENDS

Despite high expectations, no shuttler managed to progress to the quarters of the prestigious Super 750 tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tokyo, July 17: Indian shuttlers continued to falter at the Japan Open with Lakshya Sen and the star men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bowing out in the second round to draw curtains on the country's campaign at the Super 750 tournament here Thursday. World No 18 Lakshya's inconsistent run resulted in a 19-21, 11-21 loss to Japan's Kodai Naraoka in the men's singles that lasted close to an hour. The 23-year-old, who had looked promising in the opener with a commanding 21-11, 21-18 win over China's Wang Zheng



Xing, failed to carry the momentum forward. In the men's doubles, Satwik and Chirag were handed a 22-24, 14-21 defeat by the fifth-seeded Chinese combine of Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang in a battle between former world No 1 pairs. With this win, Paris Olympics silver medallists Wei Keng and Wang Chang extended their head-to-head lead over the Indians to 7-2. After a slow start, the Indian pair did well to take an 18-14 lead but couldn't hold

Yamal inherits Messi's Barca number 10 jersey

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, July 17: Lamine Yamal will switch to the No 10 jersey at Barcelona, the same number Diego Maradona, Ronaldinho and Lionel Messi wore for the Catalan club. "I'll try to build my own path, but all kids would like to be like them," Yamal said Wednesday at the club's announcement. "All three have been incredible players, they're legends, and I'll try to follow in their footsteps." Having turned 18, Yamal was able to sign the contract extension that he had agreed with Barcelona in

May, keeping him in place until 2031. "My goal is to keep winning and growing," Yamal said. "It's the club of my life. It's my home, I've been here since I was 7 years old." Yamal wore the No 19 jersey last season. The No 10 most recently was with Ansu Fati, who will play on loan with Monaco. Yamal, accompanied by his family, received the No 10 jersey from club president Joan Laporta. The announcement comes after Yamal was criticized for reportedly hiring people with dwarfism as entertainers during his lavish 18th birthday party last weekend.



FAREWELL BELLS

Goalkeeper Aditi hangs gloves

New Delhi: Exactly a decade after becoming the first Indian woman to play professional football in Europe, the trailblazing Aditi Chauhan has decided to announce her retirement from the game after a career spanning 17 years. The former India women's team goalkeeper, 32, now wants to work off the pitch and build a "stronger pathway and ecosystem" for the next generation. "Thank you, football -- for shaping me, testing me, and carrying me through. After 17 unforgettable years, I'm retiring from professional football with deep gratitude and pride," Aditi wrote in a social media post Thursday. "This game gave me more than just a career; it gave me an identity."



Russell to bid cricket goodbye

Kingston: Flamboyant T20 freelancer Andre Russell will draw the curtains on a start-stop 15-year international career for the West Indies after the second T20I against Australia here July 22. Russell's most significant achievement is being a member of two T20 World Cup winning West Indies teams in 2012 and 2016 respectively. Since 2019, Russell has featured exclusively in the T20 format. He has represented the West Indies in 84 T20Is, 56 ODIs and one solitary Test. Russell, who was part of the title-winning squads in 2012 and 2016, announced his decision just seven months ahead of the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.



Bouchard shocks tennis world

Montreal: Glamorous tennis star Eugenie Bouchard is officially set to bring the curtain down on her on-court career at the age of just 31. Bouchard shot to fame after making the Wimbledon final in 2014 - the first Canadian-born Canadian to do so. However, after struggling with form and injuries in recent years, the Canadian has confirmed she is set to retire - and on home turf no less. Bouchard will play in the National Bank Open in Montreal later this month before ending her career. Tennis Canada said Wednesday. The organization said Bouchard would be given a wild card into the tournament in her hometown. "You'll know when it's time. For me, it's now," Bouchard posted on social media, along with pictures of herself playing throughout the years. "Ending where it all started: Montreal."



Mandaviya outlines India's medal strategy

Performance-based funding, gene-testing among ideas discussed at ministry's Khelo Bharat Conclave

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 17: Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday outlined India's strategy towards finishing among the top 10 nations in the 2036 Summer Olympics and Paralympics. At Khelo Bharat Conclave, representatives of the National Sports Federations, Paralympic Committee of India, Indian Olympic Association, institutions, top corporate houses and the who's who of Indian sports administration took part in a day-long brainstorming session aimed at making



India a global power by 2047. The interactive Khelo Bharat Conclave covered several key pillars enshrined in the Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 (sports policy). Among them, critical discussions were held on the importance of good governance and the upcoming Bill that will be tabled in the Monsoon session of Parliament starting July 21. While athletes remain at the heart of the Khelo Bharat Niti, the government has highlighted how

the National Sports Federations, state governments and corporate houses have to play a major role to ensure India finish among the top 10 nations in the 2036 Summer Olympics and the Paralympics. "Sports is a public movement. We can set goals and achieve them only if we all work together. Our Prime Minister Modiji always believes in a united force when it comes to sport and we have to shed our egos, focus on comprehensive

planning and convert plans into a substantial output," Mandaviya said. Stakeholders attending the six-hour-long Khelo Bharat conclave were unanimous in their view that the government policy was ambitious but an honest endeavour towards achieving global standards in sports. Every presentation was followed by interactive sessions where several stakeholders offered suggestions that were recorded by senior ministry officials. Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Raksha Nikhil Khadse, said the Khelo Bharat Niti was drafted after studying the "ground realities" and "challenges" facing Indian sports. It has taken the government more than a year to frame the document that saw several updates after protracted discussions with key stakeholders.