



## Candid confession

Actor Shweta Tiwari says she has been cheated multiple times and how over time she learnt to deal with it

LEISURE | P2



## Hung Parl in France

France faces a hung Parliament and difficult negotiations start to form the next government, after a surprise left-wing surge

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Disinvestment push

Government should go ahead with disinvestment of public sector banks as they are in good condition, SBI says in its report

BUSINESS | P11



## Sreejesh's mantra

Veteran goalkeeper PR Sreejesh who will be playing his 4th Olympics in Paris, says that his never give up attitude helps

SPORTS | P12

## 6-YR-OLD DIES OF SNAKEBITE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, July 8:** A six-year-old girl studying in a tribal residential school in this block of Ganjam district died after being bitten by a snake in the wee hours of Monday. The girl was sleeping in the hostel when she was bitten. This is the third incident of a minor dying due to snakebites in the last couple of months.

The deceased has been identified as Ridhi Pradhan, daughter of Gobarsi Pradhan of Nabagochha village and a student of Class-1 at Darapangia Sevashram School under this block. Hostel officials rushed her to the Bhanjanagar hospital where she breathed her last.

**This is the third incident when a minor kid has died due to snakebite since April 28. Overall 34 people have succumbed to snakebites in Odisha this year**

Sources said, Ridhi was admitted to the school this year only and she was residing at the hostel. She woke up screaming after being

bitten by the snake. Other inmates found the snake and beat it to death. Hostel authorities immediately informed Ridhi's parents who rushed to the hospital only to find the lifeless body of their daughter.

When contacted, Bhanjanagar sub-collector Anil Kumar Sethi said that a probe is on to ascertain the reason and circumstances that led to the girl's death. He said financial assistance will be provided to the parents of the deceased as per government norms.

In the last week of April, six-year-old Gyandeep Kujur lost his life due to snakebite in Rajgangpur of Sundargarh district. Unable to bear the loss, his mother Sukanti breathed her last a few hours later. In June, a brother-sister duo was bitten by a venomous snake under Bonai police limits in Sundargarh district. While the four-year-old brother died, the 12-year-old sister survived.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Higher data prices will benefit our gov't. Fewer people will get to know about our failures on social media



**AT GUNDICHA:** Chariots of Lord Jagannath and His siblings - Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra - at Gundicha temple in Puri, Monday

OP PHOTO

## Chariots reach Gundicha temple

PNN & AGENCIES

**Puri, July 8:** The chariots of the sibling deities, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra reached the Gundicha temple Monday, with which the first leg of the Rath Yatra celebrations concluded here.

Thousands of people pulled the chariots, while lakhs of devotees gathered on the roadside to watch the procession on 'Badadanda' amid the heat and humidity.

The Rath Yatra began Sunday evening, but halted a few metres later due to sunset. It resumed the 2.5km journey from the 12th-century shrine to the Gundicha temple around 9.30am Monday which concluded at 2.35pm.

The three majestic chariots will remain outside the Gundicha temple on Grand Road. The deities will be taken inside the temple Tuesday in a ceremonial procession. The deities will remain at this temple for a week.

"The chariots have reached their destination. We have put cordons around the chariots and are regulating the crowd. Adequate arrangements have been made for smooth flow of vehicles," said DGP Arun Sarangi here.

## Exam compromised: SC

*While hearing more than 30 pleas related to the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024 which was conducted May 5, the Supreme Court observed that there is 'no doubt' the exam has been compromised and a retest would depend on the extent of the leak. The bench also said that if the leak had taken place through apps like Telegram and WhatsApp then also a retest should be done as 'the leaked questions spread like wildfire'.*

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 8:** Observing that a retest has to be ordered if sanctity of the NEET-UG 2024 is 'lost', the Supreme Court sought information Monday from the National Testing Agency (NTA) and the CBI about timing of the question paper leak and duration between it and the actual test. The apex court also sought from the CBI, the number of wrongdoers identified so far and the methodology adopted for the paper leak.

"One thing is clear that leak of question paper has taken place," a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said. He added that extent of question paper leak and beneficiaries across geographical boundaries have to be ascertained before



Close to 24 lakh students appeared for the NEET-UG test

67 candidates had scored 720 out of 720, six of them from the same coaching centre in Haryana

the court may order retest in the controversy-ridden medical entrance exam conducted May 5. The bench posted the matter for hearing again July 11.

Referring to legal position on ordering a retest, the top court said it will have to be 'scrutinised whether the alleged breach has taken place at systemic level, whether the breach has affected integrity of the entire exam

process and whether it is possible to segregate the beneficiaries of the fraud from the untainted students'.

"In a situation where breach affects the entirety of process and it is not possible to segregate the beneficiaries from others, it may be necessary to order a retest," said the bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

During the hearing, the bench observed if the sanctity of NEET-UG 2024 is 'lost' and if the leak of its question paper has been propagated through social media, then a retest has to be ordered.

It said if the question paper leak was taking place through 'Telegram', 'WhatsApp' and other electronic means, then 'it spreads like wildfire'. "If the sanctity of the exam is lost, then a retest has to be ordered. If we are unable to identify those who are guilty, then a retest has to be ordered," the bench observed. "Let us not be in self-denial about what happened. Assuming that the government does not cancel the exam, what will it do to identify the beneficiaries of the question paper leak?" the bench added.

It said if the breach was confined to specific areas and it is possible to identify the wrongdoers, then it may not be appropriate to order retest. **MORE P3**

## REELS COST LIFE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, July 8:** Making reels turned out to be disastrous for two youths as they fell into a water-filled stone quarry at Bada Saunlia under Tapang police limits in this district Monday.

Till the time last reports came in one of the youths had been rescued by the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) personnel, but the other one, identified as Om Prakash Rath is still missing. The search was called off late into the night, officials stated.

Locals stated that four youths had come to the water-filled quarry also known as 'Blue Lake' in a vehicle. They were taking selfies and making reels on their mobiles. Two of the youths went perilously close to the banks of the waterbody and slipped and fell.

Locals who were present at the spot immediately informed the police following which cops and teams from the fire brigade and ODRAF arrived.

ODRAF personnel launched a frantic search for the two who had fallen into the waterbody. After about an hour one of the youths was rescued. He has been hospitalised, but doctors said his condition is stable.

Local meanwhile stated that they asked the four not to go near the quarry, but they did not pay heed to the advice.

## ₹15 lakh incentives for Olympians Amit, Jena

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 8:** To encourage sportspersons in the state, Chief Minister Mohan Majhi directed Monday all district collectors to take steps to remove illegal encroachment from government lands in Odisha. In a release issued Monday, the CM ordered removal of illegal encroachments in both urban and rural areas. He added that government land is used for development and welfare for the general public. "Illegal encroachments hamper development work, so they must be cleared," Majhi stated. **P3**

"I hope the amount will inspire the athletes to deliver outstanding performances and bring glory to the nation," Majhi stated. "Olympics are the pinnacle of sports. Kishore and Amit have made the entire state proud by getting selected to represent India at the Paris Games. It is indeed a great achievement," Majhi added.

The Odisha CM also congratulated the two and wished them the best. "On behalf of the people of Odisha, I extend my best wishes and congratulations to both the young athletes. I have full faith in their willpower, hard work, dedication and perseverance, which will inspire the budding talents of the state," Majhi stated.

People of Odisha have complete confidence in both the individuals. With the blessings of



## CLEAR GOVT LAND: MAJHI

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Mohan Majhi directed Monday all district collectors to take steps to remove illegal encroachment from government lands in Odisha. In a release issued Monday, the CM ordered removal of illegal encroachments in both urban and rural areas. He added that government land is used for development and welfare for the general public. "Illegal encroachments hamper development work, so they must be cleared," Majhi stated. **P3**

Lord Jagannath, I am hoping that they will bring honour to the state and the country through their exceptional skills at the Olympics, Majhi said.

"In Odisha, sports talent is abundant. The state government is resolute in ensuring essential infrastructure, financial backing and grassroots facilities to foster the holistic development of these talents from across the state," Majhi stated.

## Stressed workers 'selling' their bosses in China

NOVEL METHOD OF EASING WORK-RELATED PRESSURE BY PROFESSIONALS ATTRACTS ATTENTION

AGENCIES

**Beijing, July 8:** Work-related stress is no more an unknown entity anymore. Employees of each and every country in the world today experience this stress. It increases when the boss consistently pressurizes, is unsupportive and insensitive. Stress can also shoot up if one has a toxic colleague constantly trying to score a few brownie points in office.

Such an unfair work environment can be a breeding ground for negativity, depression and conflict. So how does one tackle this 'stress problem'. Well, probably the professionals in various companies of China have an answer to this and to tackle this stress in a humorous manner.

A viral trend has emerged in the country where employees list



their bosses, colleagues and jobs for sale on second-hand e-commerce platforms.

On 'Xianyu', which is

'Alibaba's second-hand e-commerce platform, many are playfully selling their jobs and colleagues as a way to ease stress

from work and wash off the 'work smell'. In China, 'work smell' refers to the feeling of mental and physical exhaustion after a long day at work.

According to the *South China Morning Post*, some of the listings on the website include many titles like 'annoying bosses', 'terrible jobs', and 'hated colleagues', who are up for sale in a price range of 34,000 Yuan (approx ₹4 lakh) to 78,000 Yuan (approx ₹9 lakh).

One person wrote on the platform: "Selling a colleague who is very good at being sarcastic for 3,999 Yuan (₹45,925). I can teach you how to deal with this colleague and offer 10 tips to avoid being the scapegoat at work."

A second professional listed his 'terrible boss' for 500 Yuan (₹5,742), claiming that their personalities clashed and that the boss frequently criticised him,

causing significant mental stress.

Notably all this is done as a joke, most of those who have posted stated. If someone makes an attempt to 'buy' someone, the deal is cancelled immediately.

"Someone did pay before, but I applied to offer them a refund, and I deleted the listing afterwards. This is just my way of venting my emotions, not actually buying or selling anyone. I saw many people selling their jobs on 'Xianyu', and I thought it was interesting, so I wanted to try it too. Selling my job that has no weekends for just 9.9 Yuan feels like a small act of revenge," a person was quoted as saying by *South China Morning Post*.

The same paper talks about another person who says his office has turned into a toxic place because of 'troublesome' colleagues. "It helps to have a crack at their expense," he stated.

## SHORT TAKES

### 5 jawans killed in ambush by militants

**Jammu:** Five army personnel were killed and five others injured Monday when terrorists ambushed their vehicle in the remote Machedi area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, officials said. The terrorists hurled a grenade and opened fire targeting the vehicle near Badnota village in Lohai Malhar, 150km from Kathua town. "A total of 10 troopers were injured and five of them later succumbed to their injuries," an official said. **P9**

### Budget to focus on job creation

**Mumbai:** The 2024 Union Budget may tilt towards, but not pivot to welfare spending, with a focus on job creation, economists at Goldman Sachs said in a note Monday. The budget proposal for the financial year ending March 2025 will be presented July 23, the government said over the weekend.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	79960.38 ↓ 36.22
NIFTY	24320.55 ↓ 3.30
DOLLAR	83.55 ↑ ₹0.01
EURO	90.47 ↑ ₹0.06
GOLD	₹72,744 ↓ ₹266
SILVER	₹93,441 ↓ ₹34

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	33.3°C	33.8°C
Min Temp	25.2°C	24.8°C
Humidity	94%	82%
Rainfall	1.5mm	Nil
FORECAST		
Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain		



# leisure



## THE TOURIST SET TO GET AN INDIAN ADAPTATION

Hollywood star Jamie Dornan-starrer thriller television series *The Tourist* is all set to get an Indian adaptation. Entertainment company Banijay Asia has signed a deal with distributor All3Media International, acquiring the rights to create a local adaptation, reports *variety.com*.

## ROBBIE TO WELCOME HER FIRST CHILD WITH ACKERLEY

*Barbie* star Margot Robbie is ready to welcome her first baby with her filmmaker-actor husband, Tom Ackerley. Several sources have confirmed that the 34-year-old actress and her husband are expecting their first child, reports *People.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You are a literary person and today your power of expression will come in very handy. If you are trying to woo your beloved, an intimate conversation will prove beneficial. However, make sure not to avoid office duties, and complete your pending work before your superiors come checking.

**TAURUS**  
Ganesh sees you getting very impatient and restless this day. Thank the stars; in spite of that you will remain adequately steady and focused on your work, and perform suitably and commendably as expected. During the latter part of the day, your colleagues and superiors are likely to be more helpful and responsive.

**GEMINI**  
A fruitful day loaded with opportunities awaits you. You will be able to complete all your tasks easily at the work-front. However, you will need to put in extra effort to satisfy others. You will be engaged in discussions with your family members and neighbours later on, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Your intellectual prowess in the office will bring you happy tidings. You may give a new look to work culture in office. Ganesh advises you to think twice before embarking on new deals in the afternoon. Remember it is always good to be cautious in every aspect.

**LEO**  
You will feel tired and lazy in the morning at work today, however later on you will feel a surge of energy. Your self-confidence and motivation too will increase. Schedule all your important tasks and meetings in the afternoon, when you will be at your peak, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Today you will be much more generous than most people realise that you can be, says Ganesh. Later on you will reap the benefits of the work you had carried out in partnership with some friends. The evening holds a promise of a mixture of work and pleasure. You will attend, possibly even host, a meeting with friends and colleagues.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that today you will pay more attention to your family and family matters, keeping aside all other things. You will want to change the décor of your home and for that you may buy antique artifacts or new furniture to decorate in your home. You may go to visit a religious place or temple today. You may also try to arrange for a short trip to a nearby place.

**SCORPIO**  
The faucet of creativity will run wild today, especially when you try sorting things out with your siblings. Today, you shall bypass all incoming troubles with much ease. Your ingenuity will help you bag a job later, perhaps. In the evening, you will be the Good Samaritan and bring peace to someone, predicts Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Ganesh sees you being friendly and jovial throughout the day. Planning a get-away with family will be on top of your to-do list. Honours will be showered on you at your workplace. Be ready to receive much adulation, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
Scepticism and lack of faith in others may have prevented you from entering into a partnership, but you are likely to do so today, in keeping with the interest of your enterprise. For those engaged in jobs, truckloads of appreciation will come your way for your exceptional performance. Students will make well-informed decisions concerning their career, says Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
You have worked hard, and now you want to party harder. You catch up with some old friends, hang out with them and relax your mind. You are in a mood to celebrate and as a result, you will go out of your way to please your loved ones, foresees Ganesh. Your efforts will not in vain!

**PISCES**  
You may find yourself unable to take critical decisions on a split-second basis today, and will probably keep second-guessing yourself. Your family will be in focus today. Romance is in the air, and the evening should probably see you spend time with your soul mate, says Ganesh.



**Mumbai:** Actress Huma Qureshi is currently holidaying in the Seychelles and said that she is living the 'island life.'

## Huma obsessed with nature

Huma took to Instagram stories, where she first shared a video of herself walking on the beach. She then panned the camera to show the picturesque locale of the Seychelles.

"Living the island life," she captioned the clip. The actress then encountered a tortoise and was seen having a conversation with it. She asked the tortoise if it was 'friendly' and commented

that "it's the most beautiful thing ever." "Just hanging out with my new friends #islandlife," she wrote in the caption.

After her encounter with the tortoise, she saw a snail and wrote: "Island life with HQ, obsessed with nature."

On the work front, Huma will next be seen in the film *Gulabi*, directed by Vipul Mehta. It revolves around the true story of a brave autorickshaw driver who became a beacon of change, inspiring women to reclaim their destinies.

The actress will then be seen in *Jolly LLLB 3*, starring Akshay Kumar and Arshad Warsi. Additionally, she has the investigative police procedural drama *Bayaan*, which goes on the floors this month in Rajasthan. It is directed by Bikas Mishra.

The film also stars Chandrachur Singh, Sachin Khedekar, Avijit Dutt, Shampa Mandal, Priti Shukla, Vibhor Mayank, and Aditi Kanchan Singh.

# Shweta: Have been cheated multiple times



**Mumbai:** Actress Shweta Tiwari recently revealed that she has been cheated on multiple times and how over time she learnt to deal with it. Shweta further claimed that people who cheated on her and have lost her as a friend have been regretting it for a long time.

In a new interview with *Galatta India*, Shweta said, "I have been cheated multiple times. When you get cheated for the first time, it hits you. You cry, you feel, 'God, why me?' You try to fix it, you try to do everything possible to undo it. The second time when it happens, you will realise, this will never stop hurting, this is how it is going to be. When the third time you get cheated on, it stops hurting you. It stops having an impact on you. Now, when someone cheats on me, when someone hurts me, I don't complain about it to them. I simply get detached. It's in their personality to hurt me and now it's in my personality to not get hurt."

She added, "I don't give them that power anymore. And suddenly they realise, 'Oh she has left.' So far, I have witnessed whosever lives I have left and walked away, are regretting."

Shweta married actor Raja Chaudhary in 1998, filed for a divorce in 2007 as the latter allegedly abused her and daughter Palak. Then, in 2013, she tied the knot for the second time with actor Abhinav Kohli after dating him for three years. The couple together welcomed a son. However, in 2019, the actor filed a complaint of domestic violence against Kohli alleging harassment by him towards her and her daughter from the first marriage. The couple separated in the same year.



**MUMBAI:** Tabu is on a winning streak as she prepares to release *Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha*. In a recent interview, the gifted actress discussed her recent box-office triumph with films such as *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*, *Drishyam 2* and *Crew*.

During an interview with an entertainment blog, Tabu discussed the success of her previous films and shared insights into what she thinks while deciding on her next movie. She shared, "It's great, it's fantastic, and I can just feel gratitude for experiencing this kind of success. I just hope that it catapults me to do more interesting stuff."

Tabu emphasised that while deciding to sign a film, she considers three crucial elements: the tale itself, the importance of her part within the narrative, and the director's vision. For her to commit to a project, all of these factors must be in perfect alignment. The actress emphasised that other aspects, such as the co-stars, are irrelevant in comparison to the fundamental components of the tale and her character's place in it. She stated, "Story, the relevance of my character in the story, and the director. Just these three things have to fall into place. Kaun hai aur film mein kya hai that's not relevant to me at all."

## Tabu shares key factors in choosing movies

# Shah Rukh copied my work: Pak actor

**Islamabad:** Tauqeer Nasir, a senior actor in the Pakistani drama industry has reportedly claimed that Indian top star Shah Rukh Khan has copied his work in one of his films and has refrained from giving him due credit.



Nasir, a veteran Pakistani actor, who has recently served as Director General of Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) in Islamabad, and has been awarded many prestigious recognitions including Pride of Pakistan, Tamgha-e-Imtiaz and Best Actor, has expressed his disappointment over the lack of recognition for not being given due credit by SRK for his own contribution.

In an interview on a Youtube Channel Monday, Nasir revealed

that Shah Rukh would often praise his work and would send his regards to various people.

"Shah Rukh Khan is a talented actor. But it's disappointing to see the lack of recognition for my contribution from his side", he said.

When asked about the movie in which Shah Rukh allegedly copied his work, Nasir said: "His role in the film *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* was a direct copy of his character from the drama *Parwaaz*," he claimed in the interview.

"Even the detail of an injured leg, depicted in the film, was borrowed from my portrayal in the drama," he added.

"*Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* was essentially based on the story of *Parwaaz*, written by the renowned author Mustansar Hussain Tarar. Shah Rukh Khan should have given due credit for his inspiration," said Nasir.

Nasir went a step ahead and even called out filmmaker Karan Johar for not giving due credit to him and Mustansar Hussain Tarar for his inspiration.

### PEANUTS



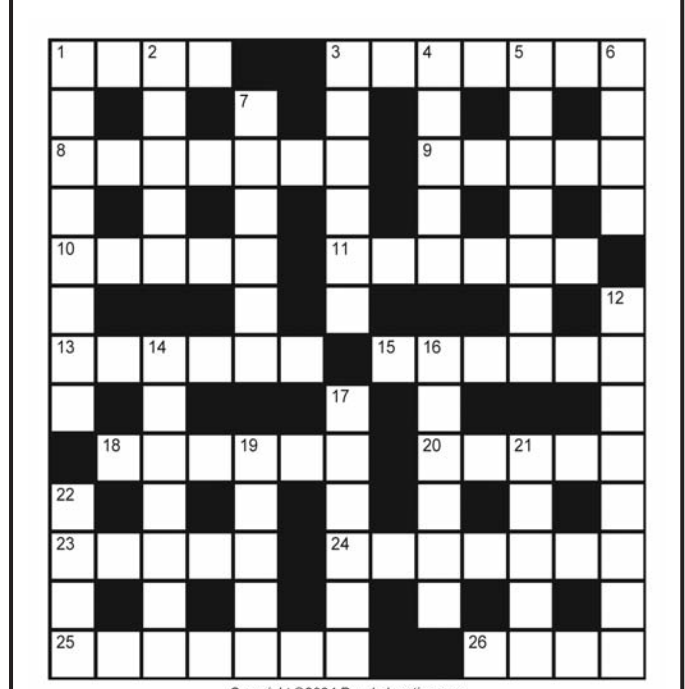
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



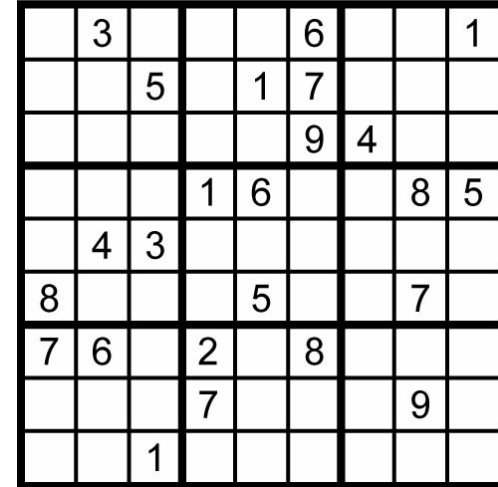
## FUN post CROSSWORD



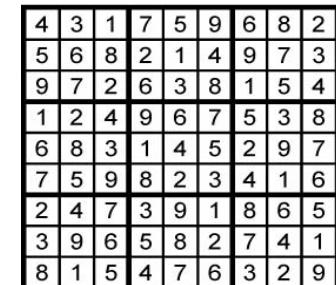
- Across**
- 1 Cereal grass
  - 3 Peculiar
  - 8 Pastry order
  - 9 Trunk
  - 10 Kind of bar
  - 11 Countless
  - 13 Curiosity
  - 15 Thessaly locale
  - 18 Blind date, maybe
  - 20 Recurring theme
  - 23 Utopian
  - 24 Hostile
  - 25 Unhurried
  - 26 Kind of meet
- Down**
- 1 Highway target (4,4)
  - 2 After business and library
  - 3 Grave
  - 4 Helicopter part
  - 5 Tell tales
  - 6 Black, in poetry
  - 7 Aimless
  - 12 Bookstore section (4-4)
  - 14 Nosedive
  - 16 Jettison
  - 17 Narrow sea channel
  - 19 Stan's partner in comedy
  - 21 Hurlled
  - 22 Wilted

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Noted vocalist Guru Bijay Kumar Jena performs during an event - 'Silpi Kanthe Jagannath' - at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Monday

PIC: MAUSAM NANDA



# downtown

## CM DIRECTS COLLECTORS TO REMOVE ENCROACHMENTS

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, July 8:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday directed all district Collectors to initiate steps towards removal of encroachments from government land, both in urban and rural areas, across the state.

Highlighting the necessity of removal of encroachments from government land, Majhi said development works have been adversely affected due to the illegal encroachments of government land which is normally used for welfare works for the general public.

He directed the district Collectors to put up proper signboards after clearing all encroachments and protect the government land by fencing the area so that it would be visible and known to the general



public. Earlier, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) department, Satyabrata Sahu asked the Collectors to identify encroachments on government land and remove those as per extant rules expeditiously. In his letter to the Collectors Saturday, Sahu said one of the primary works of officers is op-

timum management of land resources and allocation of adequate land to developmental purposes in different sectors of the economy.

"However, due to encroachment of government land in both urban and rural areas, at times, smooth allocation of land for developmental purposes is impaired. Moreover, the opportunity cost of encroached government land is unrealised in such cases. Also, the concomitant litigation arising out of illegal encroachment remains a challenge to all of us, Sahu told the Collectors.

He asked the Collectors to make a realistic survey of rural and urban encroachments and remove those as per the rules.

Sahu also asked the Collectors to submit an action taken report to the R&DM department every fortnight.



LURKING DANGER: A mini-truck falls into crater after portion of national highway 16 caves in at Dumduma in Bhubaneswar, Monday PIC: MANORANJAN MISHRA

## 1 more arrest in NEET-UG probe; total nine so far

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 8:** The CBI has arrested a person in connection with alleged "manipulation" in the NEET-UG examination in Latur in Maharashtra, taking the total number of arrests by the agency to nine, officials said.

The CBI took into custody one Nanjunethappa G in connection with the Latur case which was earlier probed by the Maharashtra Police, they said. It is alleged that two government school teachers in Latur had demanded over Rs five lakh from NEET-UG aspirants to ensure their success in the examination, they said.

The CBI has so far arrested six persons in Bihar NEET-UG paper leak case, and one each in connection with alleged manipulation in Latur and Godhra, and one from Dehradun in connection with general conspiracy, they said.

The Centre had asked the

agency to probe the matter following a massive row over alleged malpractices in the test held May 5.

The CBI has registered six FIRs in the case. The FIR from Bihar pertains to leakage of paper while the remaining from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra pertain to impersonation of candidates and cheating.

The agency's own FIR on a reference from the Union Education Ministry pertains to a "comprehensive investigation" into alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination.

NEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions. This year, the exam was conducted May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 abroad. More than 23 lakh candidates had appeared for the test.



## Take smaller steps to protect environment: Prez

PNN & AGENCIES

**Puri, July 8:** Highlighting the recent spate of heatwaves in India and frequent extreme weather events worldwide, President Droupadi Murmu Monday asked people to take 'smaller' and 'local' steps to protect the environment for a better tomorrow.

A day after participating in the annual Rath Yatra, Murmu spent some time on the beach in this holy city and later, penned her thoughts about the experience of being in close commune with nature, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

In a post on 'X', she said, "Oceans and the rich variety of flora and fauna have suffered heavily due to pollution but people living in nature's lap have sustained traditions that can show us the way to conserve the environment."

"Inhabitants of coastal areas, for example, know the language of the winds and waves of the sea. Following our ancestors, they worship the sea as God,"

Murmu said while suggesting ways to protect and conserve the environment.

The President began her four-day tour of the state July 6.

"There are places that bring us in closer touch with the essence of life and remind us that we are part of nature. Mountains, forests, rivers and seashores appeal to something deep within us. As I walked along the seashore today, I felt a communion with the surroundings - the gentle wind, the roar of the waves, and the immense expanse of water. It was a meditative experience," she said.

Murmu said, "It brought to me a profound inner peace that I had also felt when I had a darshan of Mahaprabhu Shri Jagannathji yesterday."

"And I am not alone in having such an experience; all of us can feel that way when we encounter something that is far larger than us, that sustains us and that makes our lives meaningful," she added.

In the hustle and bustle of the



President Droupadi Murmu takes a stroll at Puri beach, Monday PTI PHOTO

daily grind, people lose this connection with Mother Nature, the President said, sharing pictures of her spending time on the beach.

"Humankind believes it has mastered nature and is exploiting it for its own short-term benefits. The result is for all to see. This summer, many parts of India suffered a terrible series of heatwaves. Extreme weather events have become more fre-

quent around the globe in recent years. The situation is projected to be far worse in the decades to come," Murmu said. More than 70 per cent of the Earth's surface is made up of oceans, and global warming is leading to a rise in the sea levels, threatening to submerge coastal areas, she said in a series of posts.

The President said there are two ways to meet the challenge

## MURMU VISITS UDAYAGIRI CAVES

President Droupadi Murmu visited the Udayagiri caves, the group of Jain caves located on the Udayagiri hill here, Monday. These caves are rare specimens of early Indian rock-cut architecture. The caves showcase a civilisational and cultural thread of about 1200 years, starting 1st Century BC. Associated with Kharvela, the great king who became a follower of Jainism, these caves are precious heritage of the state.

of protection and conservation of the environment.

"Broader steps that can come from governments and international organisations, and smaller, local steps that we can take as citizens," she said.

"The two are, of course, complementary. Let us pledge to do what we can do - individually, locally - for the sake of a better tomorrow. We owe it to our children," Murmu added.

## Response sought on e-inspection of judicial records

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** In another step towards digitisation of the judiciary, the Supreme Court Monday sought responses from all 25 high courts and the Centre on a PIL seeking a nod for the lawyers and the litigants to e-inspect the digitised judicial records through either the official web portal or a mobile application.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra issued notices to the registrar generals of all the HCs and the Centre on the PIL filed by Kishan Chand Jain, a resident of Agra in Uttar Pradesh.

The plea said the SC has taken admirable and substantial strides towards introducing and leveraging technology for the purpose of ensuring access to justice, encompassing e-filing, virtual hearings, live streaming, suSwagatam (ePass), argument transcripts, judgment translations, on-boarding of Supreme Court of NJDG and e-SCR.

Certain challenges, however, persist in effectively applying technology due to the lack of proactive initiatives by the HCs, the plea said, adding that e-inspection of digitised records is an area of concern.

"Facilitate e-inspection of digitised records: To direct the HCs and their district courts to allow the applicants and/or their lawyers to conduct e-inspection of digitised court records (pending and disposed off) through the official web portal or mobile application.



NO TAKERS: Shops at the unused vending zone in CDA Sector VI area of Cuttack lying in a dilapidated condition, Monday PIC: RAJKISHORE MOHANTY

## UNIFORM BUYER-BUILDER AGREEMENT NEEDED: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** Homebuyers in the country are being defrauded, necessitating the need to bring uniformity in builder-buyer agreements, the Supreme Court observed Monday.

"Buyers are being defrauded by builders all across and that is why the need for uniformity now," a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra said.

The top court was hearing a PIL filed by lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay in 2021, saying a model agreement was required to ensure transparency and fairness



and to restrain builders and agents from indulging in unfair and restrictive trade practices. Senior advocate Devashish

Bharuka, assisting as an amicus curiae, told the bench that a final status report along with draft builder-buyer agreements had been placed on record.

It was also submitted that suggestions of states had been received and incorporated.

The bench said it would peruse the report of the amicus curiae and the objections to it.

Earlier, the bench had allowed the stakeholders, including industry associations, to furnish their suggestions on these model agreements to the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

The bench has posted the matter for hearing July 19.

## Indian-origin girl wows America with her singing talent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New York, July 8:** A nine-year-old Indian-origin girl is wowing American audiences with her singing prowess, receiving rave reviews for her performance on a popular US talent show.

Pransqa Mishra from Florida took the TV talent show 'America's Got Talent' by storm last week when she belted out the Tina Turner classic "River Deep, Mountain High".

Her powerful rendition of the song left the judges on the show Simon Cowell and Heidi Klum hugely impressed.

A report in billboard.com said Mishra's spell-binding performance earned her the coveted 'Golden Buzzer' from Klum.

"I always just love singing. It

makes me feel happy. Even when I was four years old, I would pretend that I have a microphone, and I would sing like I'm singing to the whole world," the report quoted Mishra as saying.

Crediting her grandmother for her inspiration and being her driving force, Mishra said her musical idols are legends Turner, known as the Queen of Soul n Roll, singer and 'Queen of Rock' Aretha Franklin and iconic American singer Whitney Houston.

"Despite admitting to some nerves, particularly about performing in front of the notoriously tough Simon Cowell, Pransqa's confidence shone through the moment she began singing with a commanding voice that belied her youth," the Billboard report said.



The report quoted Klum, who hit the much-sought-after Golden Buzzer that will now send Mishra straight to the live shows, as say-

I always just love singing. It makes me feel happy. Even when I was four years old, I would pretend that I have a microphone, and I would sing like I'm singing to the whole world PRANSQA MISHRA

Pransqa Mishra from Florida took the TV talent show 'America's Got Talent' by storm last week when she belted out the Tina Turner classic "River Deep, Mountain High"

Mishra's spell-binding performance earned her the coveted 'Golden Buzzer' from Klum

things, but I did not expect that." "I want you to call your grandmother and say that Heidi Klum pushed the Golden Buzzer for you," Klum, a German-American model, television host, producer, and businesswoman, said to Mishra.

Drowned by golden confetti that celebrated her achievement, an emotional and elated Mishra said: "My dream is coming true. I can't believe it."

Mishra was then joined by her family on the stage for an "emotional celebration, with tears of joy and hugs all around", the billboard.com report said.

Klum then helped Mishra call her grandmother to share the news of her accomplishment on the show. "You are absolutely incredible," Klum told the young talent, according to the report.



# Can't ask accused to share Google Maps location as bail condition: SC

SUPREME COURT SAYS THERE CAN'T BE A BAIL CONDITION ENABLING THE POLICE TO CONSTANTLY TRACK THE MOVEMENT OF THE ACCUSED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** The Supreme Court Monday said there cannot be a bail condition which allows the police to peep into the private life of an accused in a criminal case.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan set aside a bail condition imposed by the Delhi High Court requiring a Nigerian national to share the Google Maps pin in his mobile device with the investigating officer in a drugs case.

Justice Oka, pronouncing the verdict said, "There cannot be a bail condition defeating the very objective of bail itself. We have said Google pin cannot be a bail condition. There can't be a bail condition enabling the police to constantly track the movement of the accused. Police cannot be allowed to peep into the private life of the accused on bail."

The court pronounced the verdict on a plea of Frank Vitus, a Nigerian national challenging the



the Constitution. The top court took note of the condition and said prima facie it was violative of the right to privacy of the accused enlarged on bail. Similar bail conditions of sharing Google pin have been imposed by the high court on other accused in different cases as well. The top court has taken note of such bail conditions of other accused as well. On February 8, this year, the Delhi High Court granted bail to one Raman Bhuraria. He was arrested in connection with a money laundering probe arising from an alleged ₹3,269 crore financial irregularity case against Shakti Bhog Foods Limited. The high court had imposed several bail conditions and one of them read that "The applicant shall drop a Google pin location from his mobile phone to the IO concerned which shall be kept operational throughout his bail."



CAUGHT UNAWARES: A man runs for cover during sudden downpour that lashed several parts of Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

## Brutanga project gets green signal



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, July 8:** The Union government gave green signal for the construction of the Brutanga irrigation project in Nayagarh district, an official statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office said Monday.

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) gave the final clearance for the diversion of 1524.17 hectares of forest land for the construction of the said project.

With the development, the 30-year dream of the locals will get fulfilled while 23,000 hectares of land is set to be irrigated and benefit the farmers and the general public of Daspalla and Nayagarh.

During his recent visit to New Delhi, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had discussed the matter with MoEFCC Minister Bhupender Yadav. The CM thanked the Prime Minister Modi and Yadav for the forest clearance.

Notably, compensatory afforestation will be taken up in non-forest areas apart from complying with other guidelines.

## Singer Humane Sagar lands in trouble again

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, July 8:** Popular Odia singer Humane Sagar has once again landed in a soup for allegedly distorting a bhajan of Lord Jagannath.

Human Right activist Siba Sundar Swain has lodged a written complaint against Humane and Ruku Suna demanding immediate action against the duo.

As per Capital police station, where the complaint was lodged, both the singers were seen in a video distorting a bhajan.



Reportedly in the video, it was seen that the two singers used vulgar lyrics in place of the original lyrics of Lord Jagannath bhajan while the tune of the original song was imitated. Also, the two were seen laughing and having fun while singing the questionable version of the original song.

In the complaint, Swain said that the famous hymn of Lord Jagannath was mocked which hurts religious sentiments. According to sources, action will be taken to bar both the singers from working at any studio for such act.

It is not the first time that Humane was in controversy or faced charges. In 2022, he had landed in trouble for allegedly refusing to sing Lord Jagannath bhajans and issuing threats to Odia music director Debashis Mallick aka Japani. Japani had filed a complaint against the singer claiming threat to life.

The singer had earlier courted controversy for his song, 'Jhia Nuhe Tu Coronavirus', which compared a college-going girl with the deadly coronavirus. Humane later apologised for it on social media.

## Rain to lash across state during next 5 days: IMD



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 8:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Monday predicted light to moderate rain in the state during the next five days. However, intensity of rain may decrease from Tuesday, said the weather bulletin.

According to MeT office, heavy rain is likely over the districts of Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Kandhamal, and Gajapati in the next 24 hours under the impact of cyclonic circulation over the West-central Bay of Bengal (BoB) off the south Andhra Pradesh coast.

Also, thunderstorm with lightning is likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur,

Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati. In the last 24 hours, several places experienced rain and the maximum rainfall was recorded in Keonjhar at 123 mm, said the MeT office.

According to MeT, after July 11, the extent of rain will increase again. As of now, 285.8 mm of rain was expected, but only 210.6 mm has recorded. This is said to be 26 per cent less than normal.

Meanwhile, Malkangari has received more than normal rainfall, while 11 districts have recorded normal and 16 districts have recorded below normal rainfall. Heavy rainfall has also been recorded in Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts.



RELIEF

Fire Services personnel sprinkle water on people amid sweltering heat in Puri, Monday

OP PHOTO

## 'Safe Drive Safe Life aimed at promoting road safety'

**Kolkata:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday claimed that the state government's 'Safe Drive Save Life' programme has significantly helped in reducing the number of road accidents. On the eighth anniversary of the 'Safe Drive Save Life Day', Banerjee urged the people to give more importance to road safety to avert accidents on the streets. "Happy Safe Drive Save Life Day! Safe Drive Save Life is a programme designed by us to promote road safety through greater enforcement, better engineering and equipment mobilisation, and intensive awareness building," Banerjee posted on X handle. "Our concerted campaigns and exercises have significantly reduced the number of road accidents and fatalities, though the campaign continues with vigour. Let safety be paramount on our roads!" she added. Banerjee, however, did not specify any number supporting her claims on the reduction in the number of road accidents in West Bengal. "We have to give more importance to road safety, and especially to avert accidents on streets. Safe Drive Save Life is conceptualised to save lives of people," she stated.

## Mitochondrial donation offers hope for healthy offspring

Mitochondrial disease (or mito for short) is a group of conditions that affect this ability to generate the energy organs required to work properly. There are many different forms of mito and depending on the form, it can disrupt one or more organs and can cause organ failure.

There is no cure for mito. But an IVF procedure called mitochondrial donation now offers hope to families affected by some forms of mito that they can have genetically related children free from mito.

After a law to allow mitochondrial donation in Australia was passed in 2022, scientists are now preparing for a clinical trial to see if mitochondrial donation is safe and works.

What is mitochondrial disease?

There are two types of mitochondrial disease.

One is caused by faulty genes in the nuclear DNA, the DNA we inherit from both our parents and which makes us who we are.

The other is caused by faulty genes in the mitochondria's own DNA. Mito caused by faulty mitochondrial DNA is passed down through the mother. But the risk of disease is unpredictable, so a mother who is only mildly affected can have a child who develops serious disease symptoms.

Mitochondrial disease is the most common inherited metabolic condition affecting one in 5,000 people.

Some people have mild symptoms that progress slowly, while others have severe symptoms that progress rapidly. Mito can affect any organ, but organs that need a lot of energy such as brain, muscle and heart are more often affected than other organs.

What is mitochondrial donation?

Mitochondrial donation is an experimental IVF-based technique that offers people who carry faulty mitochondrial DNA the potential to have genetically related children without passing on the faulty DNA.



It involves removing the nuclear DNA from the egg of someone who carries faulty mitochondrial DNA and inserting it into a healthy egg donated by someone not affected by mito, which has had its nuclear DNA removed.

The resulting egg has the nuclear DNA of the intending parent and functioning mitochondria from the donor. Sperm is then added and this allows the transmission of both intend-

ing parents' nuclear DNA to the child.

A child born after mitochondrial donation will have genetic material from the three parties involved: nuclear DNA from the intending parents and mitochondrial DNA from the egg donor. As a result the child will likely have a reduced risk of mito, or no risk at all.

This highly technical procedure requires specially trained scientists and sophisticated

Mitochondrial donation is an experimental IVF-based technique that offers people who carry faulty mitochondrial DNA the potential to have genetically related children without passing on the faulty DNA

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donation works and is safe, the law also specifies that initial licences will be issued for pre-clinical and clinical trial research and training.

Before starting the trial, a preclinical research and training programme will ensure embryologists are trained in 'real-life' clinical conditions and existing mitochondrial donation techniques are refined and improved.

The need for donor eggs One possible source of frozen eggs is from people who have stored eggs they don't intend to use.

However, research shows that among people with stored eggs, the number one choice for what to do with eggs they don't need is to donate them to research.

This offers hope that, given the opportunity, those who have eggs stored that they don't intend to use might be willing to donate them to mitochondrial donation preclinical research.

THE CONVERSATION

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The cup has to be left clean and empty for the divine liquor to be poured into it.

SRI AUROBINDO



## France Halts Far-Right

France along with several other European countries heaved a huge sigh of relief when a Left-wing alliance of the New Popular Front (NFP) won the most seats in the French parliament after tactical voting in the second round election 7 July. The people rejected outright the Far-Right party - National Rally (RN), relegating it to the third position after President Emmanuel Macron's coalition. The NFP was formed only recently and it is a cluster of several parties ranging from the Far-Left, France Unbowed party, to the more moderate Socialists and the Ecologists. This bloc has won 182 seats in the National Assembly, making it the largest group, but well short of the 289 required for an absolute majority. Macron's Centrist Ensemble alliance won 163 seats and Marine Le Pen's Far-Right RN and its allies won 143 seats.

Liberal and democratic population of the country was on the tenterhooks after the RN had surged ahead of all other rivals in the first round of voting on 30 June. Apparently that triggered panic among majority of the French people with calls from the NFP for national mobilisation to prevent the Far-Right from capturing power. The latter's anti-immigration politics is perceived to be a threat to democracy and an egregious assault on the republican values of the country. The mood of the people could be gauged from the way several players of the French national football squad, which has so many non-white members, urged the people to vote against the Far-Right.

The victory of the Left and the Centre in France over the Far-Right comes only a few days after the UK overwhelmingly voted the Labour Party to power ending the 14 year-rule of the Conservative Party that brought chaos, instability, a dysfunctional economy and cost of living crisis for the working class. The Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez put the outcome of French parliamentary elections in the right perspective when he congratulated voters in the two countries for rejecting the Far-Right. "This week, two of the largest countries in Europe have chosen the same path that Spain chose a year ago," he said. The path is the rejection of the extreme right and a decisive commitment to a social left that addresses people's problems "with serious and brave policies," Sanchez wrote in a post on X. The UK and France have given their mandate for progress and social advancement and against the regression in rights and freedoms.

The loud and clear message is that there is no agreement or government with the extreme Right. Cheers rang out on the streets of Paris the moment the projected results showed a Leftist victory. Speaking to a crowd of his ecstatic supporters near Stalingrad square, Jean-Luc Melenchon, the firebrand leader of France Unbowed, said the results came as a "huge relief for the overwhelming majority of people in our country." For obvious reasons, Jordan Bardella, the Far-Right RN's 28-year-old leader, sought to give a spin to the results saying France had been thrown into "uncertainty and instability." The mood in his party's main office, however, was one of sombre bordering on despondency. Even 24 hours before the second round of voting the name of only one party - RN - circulated throughout the length and breadth of France as the next ruling coalition.

It appears this very possibility shook the majority of the population. Just as the smaller parties started withdrawing from the contest in the second round so as to ensure that there was only one candidate against the RN, the people rallied behind the two main alliances opposed to the RN.

France has thus shown to the world the way the UK did last week that the liberal, Left and socialist parties can resist the Far-Right capturing power in several European countries. The results from the two top European countries hold out hope for liberal, democratic rule in the pervading gloom of Far-Right forces spreading their tentacles across the globe.



Brahma Chellaney

**WITH THE US UNWILLING TO TAKE THE LEAD, IT IS UP TO INDIA TO CONVINCE RUSSIA NOT TO ALIGN ITSELF TOO CLOSELY WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC**

# THE CHINA FACTOR

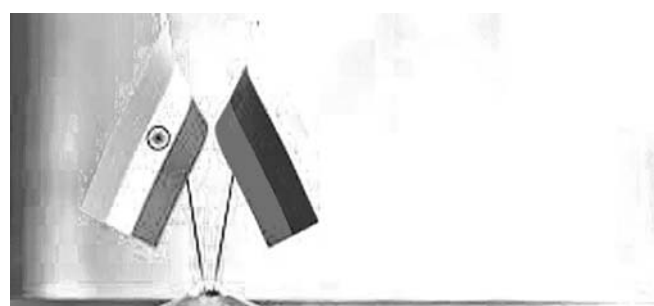
FOCUS INDO-RUSSIAN TIES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first visit to Russia in five years underscores the strategic importance India attaches to its relationship with Moscow. Indian leaders view that relationship as essential to a balanced foreign policy - especially at a time when India seems, at least to some, to be subtly tilting toward the West - and to provide strategic leverage against China.

Russia and India started holding annual summits in 2000. After Russian President Vladimir Putin's 2021 trip to New Delhi, it was Modi's turn to visit Moscow in 2022. But in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine - which spurred the United States and its partners to impose unprecedented sanctions on the country - Modi kept deferring his visit. (He did meet Putin in 2022 on the sidelines of a regional summit in Uzbekistan, where he told the Russian leader that it was no time for war.)

Today it is apparent that Russia has neither been isolated internationally nor hobbled economically, despite the West's best efforts. So, after narrowly winning a third term last month, Modi announced that he would take his long-delayed trip to Moscow. The objective is not to take Russia's side; on the contrary, at last month's G7 meeting in Italy, Modi embraced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and engaged in bilateral discussions with him. Rather, Modi seeks to affirm India's enduring foreign-policy independence, while reaping the strategic benefits of closer ties with Russia.

India's relationship with Russia dates back to 1971, when India was at its most vulnerable. The Pakistani military was attempting to crush the independence movement in then-East Pakistan - now Bangladesh - by any means necessary. Up to three million Bangladeshi civilians (mainly Hindus singled out by Pakistan's Muslim army) were slaughtered, some 200,000



Today, India maintains deeper and broader ties with the US than with Russia, but Nixon's China opening still haunts the bilateral relationship

women were coerced into rape camps, and about ten million people fled to India.

The US was more than complicit in the carnage. Far from pushing back against Pakistan's military dictator, General Yahya Khan, US President Richard Nixon's administration maintained friendly relations with him, in order to advance US interests in Asia. While Khan's army carried out the genocide in East Pakistan, Nixon sent his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, from Pakistan to Beijing on his now-famous secret trip, which led to Nixon's own visit to China in February 1972.

At a White House meeting, Kissinger credited Khan for the success of his "cloak and dagger" diplomacy with China, joking coldheartedly, "Yahya hasn't had such fun since the last Hindu massacre!" On a memorandum from Kissinger regarding the crisis, Nixon wrote, "To all hands: Don't squeeze Yahya at this time."

But that was not all. In an effort to prevent Bangladesh from achieving independence, Nixon pressed China to open a military front against India. It was Kissinger's job to goad the Chinese into initiating troop movements toward the Indian border, according to declassified White House tapes and documents. Nixon went so far as to tell Kissinger that India needed a "mass famine."

Faced with such hostility, India's then-Prime Minister

Indira Gandhi concluded a friendship treaty with the Kremlin. The pact's security provisions helped to deter China from opening a front against India when Indian forces eventually intervened to help Bangladesh gain independence in a swift, 13-day operation.

Nixon's dissatisfaction was obvious; in a show of force aimed at coercing India into limiting its involvement, the US deployed a nuclear-capable naval task force off the southern tip of India. This gunboat diplomacy led India to conduct its first underground nuclear test in 1974; the US responded by imposing technology sanctions on India that remained in place for almost three decades. Meanwhile, the US and China helped Pakistan to build its own nuclear bomb.

Today, India maintains deeper and broader ties with the US than with Russia, but Nixon's China opening still haunts the bilateral relationship. With its decades-long policy of aiding China's economic rise, the US not only created the greatest strategic adversary it has ever faced, but also saddled India with a formidable military foe that is aggressively striving for regional hegemony. One manifestation of this is the Sino-Indian military standoff in the Himalayas, which is now in its fifth year.

This is a key motivation behind India's efforts to strengthen its relationship with Russia, which India believes can counterbalance China. After all, Russia ex-

tends across 11 time zones and possesses huge reserves of natural resources, an enormous nuclear arsenal, increasing space prowess, and veto power at the United Nations Security Council. Moreover, Russia and China are natural competitors, with sharply diverging interests in Central Asia, Northeast Asia, and the Arctic, which each country regards as part of its strategic backyard.

Even so, Russia and China have been growing progressively closer in recent years - and it is largely America's fault. This alliance of convenience - which Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping have termed a "no-limits partnership" - threatens not only to accelerate an overstretched America's relative decline, but also to erode Indian security. Already, China has leveraged its position as an economic lifeline for Russia to gain access to advanced Russian military technologies, which were previously sold only to India. In fact, no country is profiting more from the Ukraine war than China.

Someone must drive a wedge between Russia and China. With the US unwilling to take the lead, it is up to India to convince Russia not to align itself too closely with the People's Republic. Fortunately this is hardly an unrealistic proposition: though Russia's promise to provide North Korea with immediate military assistance in the case of war is not good news, its new defense pact with China's estranged client does suggest that Putin is willing to chart his own course.

The first step for India must be to try to mediate an end to the Ukraine war. This would allow the US to focus on bolstering security in the Indo-Pacific, thereby improving Taiwan's chances of survival.

*The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.*

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## WISDOM CORNER

If you always put limit on everything you do, physical or anything else. It will spread into your work and into your life. There are no limits. There are only plateaus, and you must not stay there, you must go beyond them.

BRUCE LEE

Money is human happiness in the abstract; he, then, who is no longer capable of enjoying human happiness in the concrete devotes himself utterly to money.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

The world runs on individuals pursuing their self interests. The great achievements of civilization have not come from government bureaus. Einstein didn't construct his theory under order from a, from a bureaucrat. Henry Ford didn't revolutionize the automobile industry that way.

MILTON FRIEDMAN

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1762:** Catherine the Great assumed power. Catherine the Great overthrew Peter III on this day in 1762 and began her reign as empress of Russia, leading her country into full participation in the political and cultural life of Europe and extending Russian territory.
- 1856:** Nikola Tesla—a Serbian American inventor and researcher who discovered the rotating magnetic field, the basis of most alternating-current machinery—was born this day or the next in Smiljan, Croatia.
- 1877:** The first Wimbledon Championship is held. The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in London hosted the first Wimbledon championship, which was not only the first tennis championship held in England but was also a precursor to grand slam tournaments. 22 men competed in the championship and Spencer Gore became the first person to win the Wimbledon tournament.
- 1911:** English novelist, poet, and painter Mervyn Peake, who was best known for the bizarre Titus Groan trilogy of novels and for his illustrations of his novels and of children's stories, was born.
- 1955:** Rock Around the Clock by Bill Haley and His Comets became the first rock-and-roll single to hit number one on Billboard's pop charts.
- 1962:** Andy Warhol's iconic Campbell's Soup Cans make their debut. The Soup Cans were first displayed at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, California, and were instrumental in popularizing Pop Art in the United States.
- 1981:** Donkey Kong is released by Nintendo. Nintendo's famous character Mario debuted as Jumpman in this popular arcade game.

## LOL

### PULLING THE CAR

An out-of-towner drove his car into a ditch in a desolated area. Luckily, a local farmer came to help with his big strong horse named Buddy. He hitched Buddy up to the car and yelled, "Pull, Nellie, pull." Buddy didn't move. Then the farmer hollered, "Pull, Buster, pull." Buddy didn't respond. Once more the farmer

commanded, "Pull, Jennie, pull." Nothing. Then the farmer nonchalantly said, "Pull, Buddy, pull." And the horse easily dragged the car out of the ditch. The motorist was most appreciative and very curious. He asked the farmer why he called his horse by the wrong name three times. The farmer said, "Oh, Buddy is blind, and if he thought he was the only one pulling, he wouldn't even try!"

## SPECTRUM AVIATION

# Boeing crisis & spiralling air fares



Shivaji Sarkar

**THE BOEING CRISIS COULD HIT INDIA HARD WITH AIR INDIA AND AKASA HAVING FEWER AIRCRAFT AND AN OVERALL SHORTAGE OF SEATS FOR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ROUTES SPIRALLING FARES**

Air fares are to shoot up sharply as airlines in India, the third largest in the world, face shortage of aircraft. The airlines are to suffer as Boeing is in crisis for its Starliner space vehicle leakage and two fatal crashes, defrauding the US government. Boeing has lost more than \$32 billion since 2019. Fewer companies could lose that kind of money and not be facing bankruptcy. Boeing may face three years of probation, independent safety audits and \$487.3 million in penalty. This has put its new aircraft manufacturing off schedule causing delivery of far fewer planes to airlines of India. As a result, it would hamper the growth of the industry here and limit capability to offer seats to fliers and lead to severe seat shortage and spiralling of fares.

Boeing has agreed to plead guilty to a criminal fraud conspiracy charge and pay a fine of \$243.6 million to resolve a US Justice Department investigation into two 737 MAX fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019 that killed 346 people. The case stems from the department's determination that Boeing violated

an agreement that was intended to resolve a 2021 charge of conspiracy to defraud the US government. Boeing is charged with misleading regulators who approved the 737 MAX and set pilot-training requirements to fly the plane. The company blamed two relatively low-level employees for the fraud.

Boeing reached a \$2.5 billion settlement for the 2018 and 2019 Ethiopian crashes with the Justice Department in January 2021 to avoid prosecution on a single charge of fraud - misleading federal regulators who approved the plane.

In March 2019, an Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX crashed, killing all 157 on board, after which regulators around the world grounded MAX. The crashes were blamed on a flaw with a newly inducted system for pushing the aircraft nose down to prevent the plane from stalling.

Last week the Justice Department's criminal fraud section told a federal court that Boeing violated terms of the settlement by failing to make promised changes to detect and prevent violations of federal anti-fraud laws.

In such a situation, hope of Air India Express and Akasa getting their deliveries do not look bright. Questions arise how the two airlines agreed to the deal of MAX, which still has not cleared safety issues. Reportedly, China has cancelled some of its bookings.

In this background, in June 2022, Tata Sons signed an agreement during the Paris Air Show for 20 Boeing Dreamliners, 10 Boeing 777X widebody aircraft, and 190 Boeing 737 MAX narrow body aircraft along with 250 Euro Airbus for \$70 billion, according to Tata Sons and Air India Chairman N Chandrasekaran.

In June 2023, IndiGo made the world's largest aircraft order by signing a deal for 500 A320neo family planes from Airbus. The airline is expecting some deliveries. But that would not suffice the needs of the growing number of passengers. IndiGo is set to ground many aircraft. So would Spice Jet, which met with a number of security issues.

The delays, which are said to be unavoidable, would create shortage of aircraft almost with all major airlines, IndiGo,

Spice Jet, Akasa and Air India. Jet Airways and Go First have gone bankrupt adding to the shortage.

Thus, the Boeing crisis could hit India hard with Air India and Akasa having fewer aircraft and an overall shortage of seats for domestic and international routes spiralling fares. Airlines in India carried record 152 million passengers in 2023. The aviation industry fears that the reduced aircraft delivery is set to impact the market severely more so as number of passengers rise owing to a fallacious dynamic Indian Railways fare structure. It hikes train fares to the level of air fares making people prefer to travel by air. This is impacting the railways and the airlines alike.

Fares in certain destinations like Kochi-Delhi or Kolkata-Delhi or Mumbai-Delhi or Guwahati-Delhi could skyrocket and match some of the international routes as the country does not have integrated transportation approach. If rail fares are cut and reservation system rationalised, it could take off a significant load from airlines.

## Policing challenges

Sir, Policemen in India are plagued by personal and professional issues that have led to a plethora of physical and psychological disorders. An odd policeman could be as fit as a fiddle but such officers are few and far between. Obesity is a serious condition that throws policemen and police women out of shape leading to enormous policing challenges. Stressful working conditions, irregular working hours, disturbed sleep pattern, lifestyle alterations alone, or subsequent to stress, are all responsible for obesity, hypertension and diabetes mellitus among police personnel. It is common knowledge that policemen neglect their health disorders for the sake of smooth workflow, further aggravating the existing issues. Paucity of staff has done no good to their morale. Additionally, higher-ups hardly care for the well-being of their subordinates. Every police station in the country should chalk out an exhaustive diet plan, workout sessions and stress busters for its policemen.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

## Unhealthy obsession

Sir, There is no shortage of godmen in India and in Indian jails. Very often a new self-proclaimed messiah appears, and gullible individuals through them to shove their prayers and money into their hands. Godmen in India are a different breed; self-styled healers, saviours, and incarnations of the divine, they possess the uncanny ability to attract lakhs of followers, wielding a tremendous holding power over them to camouflage their nefarious activities. Even after Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and Asaram Babu have been implicated for various crimes in the recent past, India's unhealthy obsession with these babas continues. And the stampede at Hathras, UP, where lakhs gathered in a satsang organised by Bhole Baba, only reaffirms this. In a nation, marred with economic troubles and a million gods to pick from, we still hear cases of people being duped or physically harmed by organisations run by these so-called godmen, who have the strong backing of our politicians. India may be a religious country, but that should not give politicians reason to mix politics with religion. And when the two mix, things get messy, warranting society to question this unholy nexus. The country needs good men and not godmen.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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## Island city gets 101.8mm rain in just 9 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 8:** Mumbai city recorded 101.8mm of rainfall in nine hours Monday, nearly seven times more than its suburbs in the same period, while some other parts of Maharashtra also experienced heavy showers, said the weather office.

The Colaba weather station, which records weather parameters for the island city, registered 101.8mm of rainfall from 8.30am to 5.30pm, said Sushma Nair, scientist, India Meteorological Department (IMD) Mumbai.

On the contrary, the Santacruz weather station, which measures weather parameters for Mumbai's suburbs, recorded only 14.8 mm of rainfall from 8.30am to 5.30pm, she said.

The island city, generally, receives much less rain than the suburbs.

The neighbouring Raigad district has received heavy rainfall. Since the Colaba weather station is close to the Raigad district, the weather station has recorded heavy rainfall, Nair said.

The coastal district of Ratnagiri district has recorded 117.9 mm of rainfall, the IMD said.

## 430 farmers in Marathwada commit suicide from Jan to June

Maha agriculture minister and NCP leader Dhananjay Munde's home turf Beed district sees highest 101 suicides

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, July 8:** A total of 430 farmers have committed suicide in Maharashtra's traditionally parched Marathwada region in the first six months of 2024, an official said Monday.

Incidentally, the highest number of deaths, at 101, has taken place in Beed district, which is the home turf of state agriculture minister and NCP leader Dhananjay Munde.

In June alone there were 30 farmer suicides in Beed. Of the 101 who died in Beed, 46 cases qualified for ex-gratia of ₹1 lakh, five cases were disqualified and 50 are under scrutiny, he said.

Of the 430 cases, 256 qualified for ex-gratia, of which 169 were given aid, while 20 were rejected and 154 are under scrutiny, the official informed.

As per data made available by the divisional commissioner's office, the number of farmer suicides was 101 in Beed, 64 in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, 40 in Jalna, 31 in Parbhani, 17 in Hingoli, 68 in Nanded, 33 in Latur and 76 in Dharashiv.

# RAIN MAYHEM CRIPPLES MUMBAI

## LOCAL TRAIN AND FLIGHT SERVICES HIT, SCHOOLS SHUT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 8:** Heavy rains pounded Mumbai and adjoining areas, severely affecting the Central Railway's suburban services due to waterlogging on tracks and also hit the airport operations leading to 50 flight cancellations Monday.

The rain mayhem led to inundation of many low-lying areas in the city, impacting vehicular movement, and people were seen wading through flooded streets.

The state government declared a holiday for all schools in Mumbai, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts.

Some areas in Mumbai received more than 300 mm of rainfall in just six hours ending at 7am, causing inundation of roads and low-lying areas.

Heavy rains also lashed the city throughout the day, further compounding the woes of residents.

Both houses of the Maharashtra legislature were adjourned as many members and officials could not reach the Vidhan Bhavan due to the downpour.

Maharashtra Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation and Disaster Management Anil Patil and NCP MLC Amol Mitkari alighted from the Howrah-Mumbai train and walked on tracks for some distance, a video of which went viral.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde took stock of the heavy rain situation by chairing a meeting at the Mantralaya and visiting the control room of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

The civic body said there was



be a high tide of 4.40 meters in Mumbai at 1.57 pm.

Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis said in the Assembly that flooding occurs in Mumbai when there are heavy rains along with high tide.

Train services on the fast line of the Central Railway's (CR) main corridor between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Terminus (CSMT) in south Mumbai and neighbouring Thane were suspended for a few hours due to waterlogging at various places and later resumed, as per officials.

The Harbour corridor services were also suspended temporarily due to waterlogging at Chunnabhati.

Commuters complained the

suburban services were running late. There was heavy rush of commuters at various stations and in trains.

The CR officials said due to heavy rain and high tide in Mumbai, local train movement in the suburban section was affected and asked people to avoid travelling unless unavoidable.

The Western Railway said suburban trains were running up to 10 minutes late because water was above the track level between Matunga Road and Dadar due to heavy showers.

High capacity water pumps are being utilised to drain water away from the railway tracks to ensure a smooth commute for Mumbaikars, a Western Railway spokesperson said.

Heavy rains and low visibility led to the suspension of runway operations at the Mumbai airport from 2.22am to 3.40am Monday and cancellation of 50 flights, according to sources.

Flights were diverted to cities such as Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Indore, among others, they said.

A spokesperson of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking in the morning said at least 40 bus routes in the city and suburbs were either diverted or curtailed due to waterlogging on roads at various locations.

The IMD predicted moderate spells of rainfall in the city and suburbs and heavy showers at isolated places in the next 24 hours.

Some areas in Mumbai received more than 300 mm of rainfall in just six hours

Both Houses of the Maharashtra legislature were adjourned as many members and officials could not reach the Vidhan Bhavan due to the downpour

The civic body appealed to citizens not to believe in rumours and dial its control room numbers for emergency help.

In the 24-hour period ending at 8am Monday, the island city recorded an average 115.63 mm rainfall, while the eastern and

western parts of Mumbai received 168.68 mm and 165.93 mm rain, respectively, an official said. In neighbouring Thane district, a bridge was washed away while 54 persons were rescued after their houses were inundated, officials said.

At least 275 houses in different areas suffered damages and around 20 vehicles were swept away, the Thane district administration said in a release.

Police and other district authorities evacuated several tourists and trekkers stranded at the Raigad hill fort following heavy rains, officials said.



## EXTREME WEATHER

## Delhi hopes to bring in new climate action plan this year

EXTREME RAIN EVENTS HAVE EXPOSED DELHI'S LACK OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND HIGHLY VULNERABLE INFRASTRUCTURE YEAR AFTER YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** Shaken by unprecedented heat waves and heavy rainfall, Delhi hopes to implement a new but much-delayed action plan to combat climate change this year.

Official sources said the final draft was ready and awaiting approval from the city government's environment minister before being sent to the Union Environment Ministry.

Delhi was heavily impacted by extreme weather this year.

The national capital recorded 40 consecutive days of temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius since May 13, with Mungeshpur and Narela reaching 49.9 degrees in late May. The intense heat contributed to 60 deaths in the city.

On the other hand, torrential rain June 28 claimed 11 lives and caused significant property damage.

India introduced the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008, following which state governments were asked to develop their own State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) in alignment with national strategies.

Delhi's previous climate action plan for the 2010-2020 period, finalised in 2019 after a seven-year stakeholder consultation, is now outdated.

Work on a new plan began in 2021, with the first draft completed in 2022. It took around two years to finalise the consultations and fine-tune the plan, sources told PTI.

The state-level steering committee, chaired by the chief secretary, discussed the final draft in two meetings in May and June.

"The new SAPCC draft has been sent to the Delhi environment minister for approval. Once approved, it will be forwarded to the Union Environment Ministry. The Environment department, the nodal agency for the plan, is optimistic about implementing the plan this year," a source said.

The previous plan focused on six key areas - energy, transport, green cover, urban development, and projected changes in weather patterns.

The new SAPCC incorporates an analysis of extreme weather events over the past decade and focuses on air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, transport issues, air conditioning, heat islands and agriculture patterns, among others.

The draft SAPCC projects a staggering loss of ₹2.75 lakh crore by 2050 due to climate change impacts, with changes in precipitation and temperature patterns posing significant threats to vulnerable populations.

The plan identifies "heat waves/higher temperature and heavy precipitation events over fewer number of days" as major challenges.

Extreme rain events have exposed Delhi's lack of disaster preparedness and highly vulnerable infrastructure year after year.

The city recorded 228.1mm rainfall June 27-28 - more than three times the June average of 74.1mm and the highest for the month since 1936.

Last year, Delhi experienced 153 mm rain July 8-9, the maximum 24-hour precipitation in July since 1982, leading to widespread flooding and temporary school closures.

The new SAPCC projects Delhi's average temperature to rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius in a moderate-emission scenario (RCP 4.5) and by 2.1 degrees in a high-emission scenario (RCP 8.5).

A detailed district-specific vulnerability assessment identified South Delhi as the most vulnerable district and New Delhi as the least.

## BHAGAVAD GITA FOR HUMANITY, DHARMA & RELIGION

## New papers likely at Delhi varsity's Hindu Studies Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** Introduction to Vedic Literature, Upanishad Parichaya, Dharma and Religion are among the options that the Delhi University's Centre for Hindu Studies plans to offer to its students as minor electives.

In a bid to expand its course curriculum and provide a wide range of choices to students, the department has proposed to introduce six new elective papers for students, who wish to specialise in Hindu Studies and await their approval from the Academic Council of the university.

A meeting of the Academic Council of Delhi University is slated for July 12.

These additions are proposed based on the recommendations of the Governing Body of the Centre for Hindu Studies.

In addition to the UGC approved syllabus, the Centre for Hindu Studies now plans to introduce more choices for students by offering papers on various aspects of Hinduism, said an official.

These will also include papers named Bhagavad Gita for



Humanity, Hindu Thinkers and Purana Parichaya.

The students, who don't wish to study Commerce, Political Science or Computer Science as minor electives along with the major subject can avail for these choices.

"We have proposed these electives to make our course curriculum more comprehensive and aligned with students' needs. As a relatively new establishment, our effort is to make our programmes well-rounded," the official said.

Under the paper named Introduction to Vedic Literature, the students will learn about the literary works of prominent Vedic and Upanishadic commentators, from the 'Rigveda' to 'Vedangas'. The elective paper named 'Upanishad Parichaya' will introduce foundational 'Hindutva' as analysed in the Upanishads.

The Bhagavad Gita for Humanity elective will acquaint students with foundational Indian spirituality as depicted in

the Bhagavad Gita, and the 'Purana Parichaya' paper will cover Hindu history, culture, geography, architecture and other knowledge systems.

"The Hindu Thinkers paper aims to familiarise students with the prominent thoughts of distinguished Hindu thinkers from ancient and modern times. Furthermore, the paper named 'Dharma and Religion' will introduce and develop foundational concepts of Hindu 'Adhyatma' and 'Dharma', comparing them with Western religious traditions," reads the learning objective of the proposed electives.

The Centre also plans to introduce two general electives for the students who are not majoring in Hindu Studies but have chosen Commerce, Political Science or Computer Science as their main subjects. These students will be offered papers named 'Hindu Jivana Drishti' and 'Hindu Manovijnana' to familiarise them with Hindu Studies.

Additionally, the Centre plans to offer six new interdisciplinary electives specifically for Political Science students.

## 'Wagh nakh' being brought from London not original: Historian

'WAGH NAKH' IS AN ENDURING AND REVERED SYMBOL OF WARRIOR KING SHIVAJI'S TENACITY AND VALOUR AS IT WAS USED TO SUBDUED AND KILL A PHYSICALLY LARGER OPPONENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 8:** The 'wagh nakh' or tiger claw shaped weapon of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj that the Maharashtra government intends to bring from a museum in London is not original, historian Indrajit Sawant said Monday and as-

serted the one used by the legendary emperor remains in the state's Satara itself.

The state government had last year signed a memorandum of understanding with the London-based museum to get the 'wagh nakh' that was used by the founder of the Maratha Empire to kill Bijapur Sultanate's general Afzal Khan in 1659.

The 'wagh nakh' is an enduring and revered symbol of the warrior king's tenacity and valour as it was used to subdue and kill a physically larger opponent.

"The 'wagh nakh' is being brought to Maharashtra on a loan agreement of ₹30 crore for three years. In its reply to my letter, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London has said there is no evidence the 'wagh nakh' (in its possession) belongs to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Sawant told reporters in



Kolhapur.

"The team from Maharashtra under Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar that visited London to sign the loan agreement has been told to display this information. The real 'wagh nakh' is in Satara itself," Sawant claimed.

Another researcher, Pandurang Balkawade, told a Marathi TV channel that Pratapsinh Chhatrapati gave the 'wagh nakh' from his personal collection to Britisher Garnt Duff between 1818 and 1823, adding that Duff's descendants handed it over to the

The real 'wagh nakh' is in Satara itself

INDRAJIT SAWANT | HISTORIAN

museum. However, Sawant said Pratapsinh Chhatrapati showed the 'wagh nakh' to several persons after Duff left India.

Speaking on the issue, Minister Shambhuraj Desai said it is well known that the 'Bhavani talwar' and the 'wagh nakh' are in London.

"Our government verified the details and then signed the MoU. If historians have any other view, our government will clarify the issue," Desai said.

Senior Maharashtra BJP leader Ashish Shelar said the government's stand is clear that all artefacts of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, which are inspirations for the people, will be preserved, promoted and put on display.



## of the day quote

The Nyukmadung War Memorial will not only chronicle the events and bravery of the 1962 war but also showcase local cultural and historical artefacts. I have suggested that the collection include items from all tribes of Arunachal to truly reflect the diverse heritage of our state

PEMA KHANDU | CM, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Happy Safe Drive Save Life Day! Safe Drive Save Life is a programme designed by us to promote road safety through greater enforcement, better engineering and equipment mobilisation, and intensive awareness building

MAMATA BANERJEE | CM, WEST BENGAL

I have zero tolerance for injustice. Let it be clear: my administration stands firmly with the victims and their families. We are committed to creating a safer Maharashtra for all its citizens

EKNATH SHINDE | CM, MAHARASHTRA

## SHORT TAKES

### 12 more killed in lightning strikes

**Patna:** Twelve more people have been killed in lightning strikes in seven districts of Bihar, officials said Monday. With the fresh fatalities, over 40 people have lost their lives to lightning strikes in various districts of Bihar in the last 10 days, including 22 in the last 48 hours. The 12 fresh fatalities were reported in the last 24 hours, while 10 deaths were reported in the preceding 24 hours, they said.

### Four killed in violent clash

**Chandigarh:** Four people were killed after two groups of villagers in Punjab's Gurdaspur district attacked and opened fire at each other apparently over an old rivalry, police said Monday. The incident took place at Lighanwala Chowk in Sri Hargobindpur in Batala Sunday night. There were 13 people in total in the two groups and all of them hail from village Vithwan here. Two persons from each group died in the firing, said Batala Senior Superintendent of Police Ashwini Gotyal.

### Fifty injured as bus overturns

**Chandigarh:** An overloaded Haryana Roadways mini bus overturned near Pinjore Monday, leaving 50 injured, most of them school children, officials said. According to preliminary information, over 40 children were among those injured in the incident, they said. Four adults were also brought to the civil hospital in Panchkula and one of them is a 60-year-old woman, who suffered crush injury on her arm. She has been referred to PGIMER at Chandigarh.

### Three cousins drown in river

**Jaipur:** Three cousins drowned in a river in Banswara district of Rajasthan while washing their hands and feet in it, police said Monday. The three girls, all aged 10-11, had taken their goats for grazing along the banks of Anas river Sunday, they said. As they were washing their hands and feet in the river, they slipped into deep water and drowned, Assistant Sub-Inspector Jitendra Patidar said Monday. Villagers took them out of the river and sent them to a hospital where doctors declared them dead.



If the government wants to make it a Hindu nation, then it should also create a 'Dharmik Fund' (religious fund) for disbursing compensations in such accidents (hathras). If not the government, then who will compensate for such acts?

RAKESH TIKAIT | FARMER LEADER

## JALANDHAR WEST BYPOLL

Jalandhar District Election Officer Himanshu Aggarwal Monday said indelible ink will be applied on the middle finger of the left hand of voters instead of index finger during the July 10 bypoll to the Jalandhar West reserve Assembly constituency. This change has come in view of the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections during which the index fingers were marked with the ink



# Rahul urges PM to visit violence-hit Manipur

During the day-long visit to Manipur, Gandhi visited several relief camps where people displaced by the ethnic violence in the northeastern state are staying

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, July 8:** Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi Monday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the ethnic violence-affected Manipur to give solace to the people.

Describing what has happened in Manipur as a "tremendous tragedy", Gandhi also said that Congress is ready to do everything it can to bring peace to the state. Ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities since May last year claimed more than 200 lives in Manipur since May last year.

"The PM should have visited the state long back. It is important that he visit Manipur. I request him to come to Manipur and try and understand what is happening here. People of Manipur, probably people of the entire country, want the PM to visit the state and listen to the victims' woes. It will comfort the people. Congress is ready to support anything that would improve the situation," the Raebareilly MP told a press conference here.

During his day-long visit to Manipur, Gandhi visited several relief camps where people displaced by the ethnic violence in the northeastern state are staying.

"This is the third time I come



I want to tell all the people of Manipur (that) I came here as your brother, as somebody who wants to help you, wants to work with you to bring back peace in Manipur. I am ready to do whatever I can, Congress party is ready to do whatever it can to bring back peace here

RAHUL GANDHI | LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

here since the problem started. It has been a tremendous tragedy. I was expecting some improvement in the situation. But I was quite disappointed to see that the situation is still nowhere near where it should be," he said.

Gandhi visited Manipur weeks after ethnic violence broke out in Manipur May 3 last year. He also began his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' from the state in January 2024. This is his first visit to Manipur after becoming the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and after the Congress won both Lok Sabha seats in the state.

Gandhi said he came to the state to listen to the woes of the violence-hit people and build confidence in them and as an Opposition leader, he would pressure the government so that it acts.

"I want to tell all the people of Manipur (that) I came here as

your brother, as somebody who wants to help you, wants to work with you to bring back peace in Manipur. I am ready to do whatever I can, Congress party is ready to do whatever it can to bring back peace here," he said.

Stating that he had never seen anywhere in India what is going on in Manipur, Gandhi asserted that violence and hatred are not going to get any solution, while respect and interaction can.

The leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha said that whenever the people of Manipur want, he and his party will be available.

"Indian government and everybody who considers himself a patriot must embrace the people of Manipur," said the Congress leader who also met Governor Anusuiya Uikey before holding the press conference.

## SANDESHKHALI ALLEGATIONS

# SC rejects Bengal govt's plea against CBI probe

The High Court had ordered a CBI investigation into the allegations of crimes against women and land grabbing in Sandeshkhali April 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** "Why should the state be interested in protecting someone?" the Supreme Court said Monday while dismissing the West Bengal government's plea challenging the high court's order, directing a CBI probe into the allegations of crimes against women and land grabbing in Sandeshkhali.

"It is all related to Sandeshkhali. You (state) didn't do anything for months," a bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan told senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who was appearing for the West Bengal government.

Singhvi told the apex court that far-reaching directions issued by the Calcutta High Court to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at the most could be restricted to two FIRs related to an attack on the Enforcement Directorate officials in Sandeshkhali.

"The impugned order (of high court) goes into ration scam," he said, adding that in the alleged scam, 43 FIRs were registered.

"FIRs were registered four years back. Who are the accused? When were the arrests made," the bench asked.

"Why should the state be in-



terested in protecting someone?" it observed.

On the last date of the hearing, the counsel appearing for the state said the matter be adjourned after the apex court asked this specific query, it added.

The bench dismissed the plea filed by the state government and clarified that any observations made in the high court's order shall not influence the CBI in conducting the investigation.

"Thank you. Dismissed," it said. The CBI is already investigating the attack on the ED officials in Sandeshkhali and has registered three FIRs related to the January 5 incident.

Noting that the investigation will be monitored by the court, the high court directed the CBI to file a comprehensive report on the alleged illegal conversion of agricultural land into water bodies for pisciculture after conducting a thorough inspection of revenue records and physical inspection of land alleged to have been converted.

The high court also directed the CBI to investigate allegations of crimes against women and land grabbing in Sandeshkhali and submit a comprehensive report to it on the next date of hearing.

The court said that an impartial enquiry was necessary in the interest of justice and fair play

## BMW CASE

# 11 teams formed to nab accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 8:** Mumbai police formed 11 teams and also roped in the Crime Branch to nab the 24-year-old son of a ruling Shiv Sena leader after a BMW car the youth was driving crashed into a scooter, killing a woman and injuring her husband, an official said.

A Look Out Circular (LOC) has also been put out against Mihir Shah, son of Rajesh Shah, a Shiv Sena leader from neighbouring Palghar district, the official said Monday.

Mihir Shah was allegedly driving the BMW car which fatally knocked down Kaveri Nakhwa (45) and injured her husband Pradeep while the couple was on their two-wheeler in Mumbai's Worli area Sunday morning, police said.

CCTV footage produced by police in court during the day showed Kaveri Nakhwa being dragged by the car for 1.5 kilometres. Footage showed Mihir Shah and co-accused Rajrishi Bidawat pulling the woman off the bonnet, placing her on the road and then mowing her down again while reversing the luxury vehicle.



As per police, Mihir Shah took the car to Kalanagar in Bandra, abandoned the vehicle in the presence of Bidawat, took another car and fled to Borivali in the northern tip of the metropolis.

"He went to the residence of his female friend and has been untraceable since. He switched off his mobile phone in Borivali area. Considering the possibility of him fleeing Maharashtra, police teams have been sent to nearby states, including Gujarat," the official said. Police have also visited his residence in Palghar but it was locked, the official added.

As per the probe so far, Mihir was partying with four friends in a bar in Juhu till the early hours of Sunday, after which he and his driver proceeded towards south Mumbai.

"After the accident, Mihir's father and co-accused Rajesh Shah came to the spot within one-and-a-half hours. He was at the spot at 6:45am. The hit-and-run incident took place at 5:30am. Rajesh Shah has been booked for allegedly providing misinformation and destruction of evidence," the official said.

Rajesh Shah and Bidawat were produced in the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (Sewree) SP Bhosale earlier in the day and were remanded in 14-day judicial and one-day police custody, respectively.

Rajesh Shah was, however, later granted bail by court.

# Patanjali's workshop on 'Corporate Training for Professional Development/Core Skills'

AGENCIES

**Haridwar, July 8:** The three-day workshop on "Corporate Training for Professional Development/Core Skills," organised under the auspices of the IT company Bharuwa Solutions, concluded at Patanjali University's auditorium.

On the concluding day of the workshop, Yogrishi Swami Ramdev, founder of Patanjali Yogpeeth, stated that the solution to all IT sector problems lies in the products of 'Bharuwa Solutions'.

Patanjali's IT arm, Bharuwa Solutions, has demonstrated its IT expertise in numerous companies, including Patanjali. Recently, Bharuwa has secured contracts with several well-known companies in the IT industry. This development heralds a new era of innovation for Patanjali in the IT sector. Acharya Balkrishna mentioned that



Patanjali is well-known worldwide for its contributions to the fields of Yoga and Ayurveda.

Now, Patanjali has expanded into the realm of Information Technology (IT) with Bharuwa Solutions. Bharuwa has achieved 8 patents in the IT sector, and Welspun Company, Mother Dairy, Amul, Syntex, Railways, and the canteen of the new Parliament are using its products. Additionally, Bharuwa has re-

cently been awarded a contract to centralize and monitor the data of 26 airports. He mentioned that today, Bharuwa Solutions is responsible for meeting Patanjali's IT requirements.

Bharuwa Solutions possesses exceptional infrastructure and holds all relevant certifications. The majority of the software developed by Bharuwa Solutions leverages artificial intelligence technology.

# Air pollution reduces chances of live birth from IVF

Being exposed to air pollution around the time of egg retrieval can significantly curb the odds of a successful transfer through in vitro fertilisation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** Air pollution could lower the chances of a live birth from in vitro fertilisation (IVF) by nearly 40 per cent even in areas with "excellent" air quality, a study has found.

IVF involves fertilising a mature egg with a sperm in a lab to form an embryo, which is then placed in a uterus to develop into a baby.

In this study, over an eight-year period, researchers analysed close to 3,660 frozen embryo transfers (an IVF procedure) from 1,836 patients in Perth, Australia. During the transfer process, frozen embryos are thawed and placed in a woman's uterus.

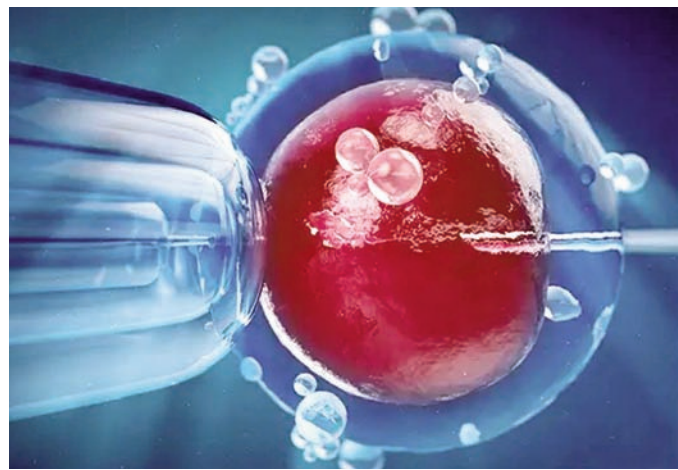
The researchers, including those from the Perth Children's Hospital, looked at air pollutant levels over four lengths of duration - 24 hours, two weeks,

four weeks, and three months - prior to oocyte retrieval, which is when eggs are taken from the women's ovaries before being fertilised with a sperm.

A higher exposure to fine particulate matter (PM10) in the two weeks leading up to oocyte collection was found to cut down the successful birth rate of an IVF by 38 per cent.

Increasing exposure to PM2.5 in the three months prior to oocyte collection was also related to lowered chances of live birth, the researchers found. The findings were presented at the 40th Annual Meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) in Amsterdam.

"Our results reveal a negative linear association between particulate matter exposure during the two weeks and three months prior to oocyte collec-



Human reproduction is not immune to pollution and climate change, the greatest threats to human health

SEBASTIAN LEATHERSICH | LEAD AUTHOR

tion and subsequent live birth rates from those oocytes," said

lead author Sebastian Leathersich, a specialist obstre-

trician and gynaecologist, Perth Children's Hospital. The negative impacts of air pollution were observed despite excellent air quality prevailing during the study period, with PM10 and PM2.5 levels exceeding the World Health Organization's guidelines on only 0.4 per cent and 4.5 per cent of the study days, respectively, the researchers stressed.

"This association is independent of the air quality at the time of frozen embryo transfer. These findings suggest that pol-

lution negatively affects the quality of the eggs, not just the early stages of pregnancy, which is a distinction that has not been previously reported," said Leathersich.

Human reproduction is not immune to pollution and climate change, the greatest threats to human health, said Leathersich.

"Even in a part of the world with exceptional air quality, where very few days exceed the internationally accepted upper limits for pollution, there is a strong negative correlation between the amount of air pollution and the live birth rate in frozen embryo transfer cycles. Minimising pollutant exposure must be a key public health priority," said Leathersich.

The study appears as an abstract in the journal Human Reproduction.



of the day quote

If you do not discharge your constitutional duty, if you do not participate in the debate, if you do not take your point further, you are in a sense not performing your duty



JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

Even now, people are lining up in many places for clean drinking water. Even though the government claims that new connections were given, at least six lakh water pipe connections have just air coming through them



ANOOP JACOB | MLA, UDF

The mob lynching of the Muslim youth in the heart of the old city a fortnight ago, followed by the stampede in neighbouring Hathras is a clear pointer that the police force in Uttar Pradesh has lost the moral right to serve the common people because in both cases innocents are being framed by the police, while in both cases the guilty are moving scot-free



During his speech on the confidence motion in the assembly, the chief minister said, "One could see the conduct of BJP legislators after seeing me again in the House."

CHANDRASHEKHAR AZAD | MP AND CHIEF, AZAD SAMAJ PARTY

X POST OF THE DAY

We have already seen a 45-year high unemployment rate, a 50-year low household savings rate, and the first-ever decrease in real rural consumption. Now, we have another disturbing fact to reckon with. The Hindu reports that in the April-June quarter of this 2023/24 fiscal year, fresh investments announced by corporates is just Rs. 44,000 crore. This is a 20-year low. Compare the decade of Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister with that of the non-biological PM. Investment as percentage of GDP (average over time) was 33.4% during the UPA and 28.7% in the Anayay-kaal

HAATH BADLEGA HALAAT

SHORT TAKES

Criminal activities: 108 cops dismissed

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala government has dismissed 108 police officers from service for their involvement in criminal activities since 2016, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said Monday. Answering a question raised in the state Assembly on the action taken against the officers with criminal backgrounds, he said such officials are being closely monitored. "From 2016 to May 31, 2024, 108 police officers were dismissed from the service for their involvement in criminal activities. The officials involved in corruption, anti-social activities, mafia relations are being closely monitored, and directions have been issued to take stern action against such people," Vijayan said.

Bitcoin trade in J&K for terror financing

Jammu: The SIA investigations into terror financing cases have found a man involved in funding the terrorist organisations through Bitcoin trade for fueling mass violence and terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, officials Monday said. The State Investigating Agency (SIA) has issued a public police request for identification of the man behind terror financing in the region. During investigation, the SIA found the involvement of a man in routing money and funds via Bitcoin trade to the conduits of terrorist organisations for fueling mass violence and terrorist activities, an officer of the SIA told PTI. A case was registered in the SIA in the terror financing case in the Kashmir Valley in 2022, he said.



I personally learnt a lot from Rajasekhara Reddy ji. My 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', the walk from Kanyakumari to Kashmir was inspired by Rajasekhara Reddy ji's yatra across Andhra Pradesh

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

EC ALLOWS SHARAD PAWAR-LED NCP-SP TO ACCEPT DONATIONS

The Election Commission Monday allowed the Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar to accept donations keeping in mind the forthcoming assembly polls in Maharashtra. The Sharad Pawar-led outfit had requested the commission to certify the status of the party for it to accept voluntary contributions from the public



Soren govt wins trust vote

It including ex-CM Champai sworn in as mins amid a walkout by Oppn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, July 8: Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren and 10 other leaders of the JMM-led coalition took oath as ministers in the Hemant Soren government after it won a trust vote in the assembly amid a walkout by Opposition members Monday.

A total of 45 MLAs, including nominated member Glen Joseph Galstana, voted in favour of the confidence motion.

BJP and AJSU legislators walked out of the House as the headcount for voting started. The BJP-led opposition has 24 legislators of the saffron party and three of the AJSU Party.

After winning the trust vote, Hemant Soren said, "Today, everyone again got to witness the unity and strength of the ruling alliance. I thank the Speaker and all the alliance MLAs."

He said the JMM-led alliance has been performing strongly since coming to power in 2019 by following the constitutional procedures and it was again witnessed during the day.

During his speech on the confidence motion in the assembly, the chief minister said, "One could see the conduct of BJP legislators after seeing me again in the House."

Speaking on the confidence motion, Leader of Opposition Amar Bauri alleged that the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance government did not fulfill even a single promise in the last five years.

Earlier, BJP legislators trooped into the well seeking Speaker



The BJP doesn't have any agenda for the state. The people of the country held a mirror to the BJP in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls. In the upcoming assembly elections, they will face strong resistance from the JMM-led alliance

HEMANT SOREN | CM, JHARKHAND

Rabindra Nath Mahto's permission to allow MLA Bhanu Pratap Sahi to speak, which was turned down by the Speaker.

Seventy-five MLAs were present in the assembly during the voting. Independent legislator Saryu Roy abstained from voting.

After the trust vote, Jharkhand Governor CP Radhakrishnan administered the oath of office and secrecy to the 11 leaders, including Champai Soren, at a function in the Raj Bhavan in the presence of Chief Minister Hemant Soren and other senior politicians of the JMM-led alliance and government officials.

Champai Soren had resigned from the post of CM July 3, a day before JMM executive pres-

ident Hemant Soren took oath as the 13th chief minister of Jharkhand July 4.

After taking oath as a minister, Champai Soren said, "Whatever I have done in a short span as the CM is before everyone. Now let's see what responsibility is given to me."

Radhakrishnan, after administering the oath, said, "My best wishes to all the new ministers and to the new chief minister (Hemant Soren). We always go by the Constitution, which calls for addressing the needs of the poorest of the poor. I expect only that from the new government."

The new faces in the 12-member cabinet, which includes the chief minister, are Congress's

The Enforcement Directorate has moved SC challenging the Jharkhand High Court order granting bail to JMM leader Hemant Soren

Jamtara MLA Irfan Ansari, Mahagama MLA Deepika Pandey Singh and JMM's Latehar MLA Baidynath Ram.

Ram's name had been excluded at the last moment from the list of ministers in the previous Champai Soren cabinet, which he had termed as an "insult".

Those who retained their ministerial berths include Rameshwar Oraon and Banna Gupta of the Congress, besides JMM's Mithilesh Kumar Thakur, Hafizul Hasan, Dipak Birua and Bebi Devi and RJD's Satyanand Bhokta.

Hemant Soren was released from jail June 28 after the Jharkhand High Court granted bail to him in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. He had resigned as the CM shortly before his arrest on January 31 by the Enforcement Directorate.

The current strength of the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly is 76. The ruling JMM-Congress-RJD alliance had handed over a support list of 44 MLAs to the Governor when Hemant Soren staked his claim to form the government July 3.

Assembly elections are due in Jharkhand later this year.

5 soldiers killed, 5 injured in terrorist ambush in Kathua



The terror attack is the fifth such incident in Jammu region in a month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathua, July 8: Five army personnel, including a Junior Commissioned Officer, were killed and as many were injured Monday when heavily armed terrorists ambushed a patrolling party in the remote Machedi area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, officials said.

The terror attack, the fifth in Jammu region in a month, evoked widespread condemnation with political leaders including three former chief ministers expressing concern over the growing terror incidents, especially in the Jammu region where militancy has returned after being wiped out over two decades ago.

The terrorists targeted an army truck, part of a routine patrolling party, with a grenade and gunfire on the Machedi-Kindli-

Malhar road near Badnota village in Lohai Malhar, approximately 150 km from Kathua town, at around 3:30 pm, the officials said.

After the ambush, the terrorists fled into the nearby forest as the army, assisted by police and paramilitary personnel, retaliated. The army vehicle, carrying ten occupants, bore the brunt of the attack, resulting in fatal injuries to five soldiers, including a JCO. Five others are undergoing treatment.

An exchange of fire between the terrorists and security forces ensued, with reinforcements quickly dispatched to the area to neutralise the attackers - believed to be three in number and heavily armed - who may have recently infiltrated from across the border.

It is the second major attack in Kathua district within one month, following a similar confrontation June 12 and 13 that left two terrorists and a CRPF jawan dead.

HINDU ROW

Shankaracharya backs Rahul

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 8: Days after Rahul Gandhi's combative speech in the Lok Sabha, Swami Avimuktেশ्वarananda, the 46th Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math, has come out in support of the Congress leader.

A controversy erupted during the debate on the Motion of Thanks for the President's address when Rahul Gandhi accused BJP leaders of allegedly dividing people on communal lines.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, denouncing the speech, had said that Rahul Gandhi had branded the "entire Hindu community as violent." This accusation ignited a heated exchange in Parliament, leading to the Speaker striking off several contentious statements from the records.

The Shankaracharya, a respected figure among Hindus, offered a different perspective. "We listened attentively to Rahul Gandhi's entire speech. He unequivocally emphasizes that Hinduism rejects violence," the Shankaracharya said Sunday.



We listened attentively to Rahul Gandhi's entire speech. He unequivocally emphasizes that Hinduism rejects violence

SWAMI AVIMUKTেশ्वARANANDA | 46TH SHANKARACHARYA

In a video that has gone viral on social media, the pontiff also criticized what he called the selective dissemination of Gandhi's speech, urging accountability for those who distort facts. "Presenting only fragments of Gandhi's statement is misleading and unethical," he remarked, adding that those responsible should be punished.

Congress MP and Rahul Gandhi's sister, Priyanka Gandhi, has also defended her brother against the allegations. "Rahul can never speak against Hindus. His remarks were directed at BJP and its leaders," she said.

Stalin appoints panel to suggest changes in new criminal laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, July 8: Taking the first step to effect Tamil Nadu-specific amendments to the new criminal laws, Chief Minister MK Stalin Monday ordered setting up of a one-man committee, to be led by a retired High Court judge, to study the three laws and make recommendations to the state government over making amendments.

After chairing a high-level consultative meeting at the Secretariat here to deliberate on state amendments to the Central laws, Stalin directed officials to set up a one-man panel to be led by retired judge of the Madras High Court, Justice M Sathyarayanan.

"This committee will clearly examine the new laws, hold consultations with stakeholders including advocates at the state-level and submit a report (on state-level amendments) within one month to the state government," an official release here said.

The government recalled Stalin writing to Union Home Minister Amit Shah June 17, 2024 on 'issues' in the new laws and urging the Centre to defer enforcing the three laws.

TOP COURT'S CORNER

Nithari killings: SC agrees to hear CBI pleas against HC verdict acquitting Koli

New Delhi: The Supreme Court agreed Monday to hear pleas filed by the CBI challenging the Allahabad High Court's verdict acquitting Surendra Koli in the sensational 2006 Nithari serial killings case. A bench of Justices BR Gai and KV Viswanathan sought a response from Koli on separate pleas filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the high court's verdict dated October 16, 2023. The apex court in May agreed to hear a plea filed by the father of one of the victims challenging the high court's order acquitting Koli in the case. In this case, Pandher was acquitted by the sessions court while Koli was awarded death penalty September 28, 2010. On Monday, the top court said the pleas filed by the CBI would come up for hearing along with the petition of the victim's father. During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, said Koli was a "serial killer" who lured young girls and murdered them. Terming the incident as "grievous", Mehta said accusations of cannibalism were there in the case. The high court had acquitted domestic help Koli and his employer Moninder Singh Pandher in the Nithari serial killings case in which they were facing death sentence, holding that the prosecution failed to prove the guilt "beyond reasonable doubt" and that the investigation was "botched up".

SC asks Centre to frame model policy on menstrual leave

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday directed the Centre to frame a model policy on menstrual leave for women employees by holding consultations with states and other stakeholders. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said the issue related to policy and was not an issue for the courts to look into. Moreover, such a decision from a court on granting such leave to women may prove to be counterproductive and "detrimental" to the cause as employers may avoid employing them. How will the leave encourage more women to be part of the workforce, the court asked the petitioner and said mandating such leave will lead to women "being shunned from the workforce".

Guidelines on portrayal of disabled persons in visual media, films

New Delhi: The Supreme Court laid down guidelines against "disparaging" portrayal of persons with disabilities in visual media and films Monday, saying that terms such as "cripple" and "spastic" have acquired "devalued meanings" in societal perceptions. The verdict came on a plea filed by one Nipun Malhotra, who submitted that the Hindi film 'Aankh Micholi' contained deprecatory references to differently-abled persons. Pronouncing the verdict, a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said, "Words cultivate institutional discrimination and terms such as cripple and spastic have come to acquire devalued meanings in societal perceptions about persons with disabilities." Laying down several guidelines, the bench said the film certification body CBFC must invite the opinion of experts before allowing screening.

A year marred by paper leaks, last minute cancellations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 8: The Supreme Court hearing in cases pertaining to alleged irregularities in medical entrance exam NEET-UG has been postponed for July 11 with aspirants waiting for clarity on the fate of the crucial exam. The NEET row has put the spotlight on paper leaks and discrepancies in the examination system.

Here is a list of exams that have been affected this year either due to paper leaks or last moment cancellations due to other reasons: NEET-UG

In NEET-UG 2024, a total of 67 students had scored a perfect 720, unprecedented in the NTA's history, with six from a Haryana centre figuring in the list, raising suspicion about irregularities in the examination. It has been alleged that grace marks contributed to the 67 students

sharing the top rank.

The number of candidates sharing the top rank in the NEET-UG was reduced to 61 from 67 as the NTA announced the revised results July 1 after conducting a retest for 1,563 candidates.

The exam has also been riddled with allegations of paper leaks which are being probed by the CBI with several quarters demanding a retest. The Education Ministry has been maintaining that it is not fair to jeopardise careers of lakhs of candidates who have rightfully cleared the exam.

Observing that a re-test has to be ordered if sanctity of the NEET-UG 2024 is "lost", the Supreme Court Monday sought information from the National Testing Agency and the CBI about timing of the question paper leak and duration between the leak and the actual test.

UGC-NET

The exam was cancelled a day after its conduct when the



Education Ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam was compromised. Later, the ministry said the paper was leaked on the dark web.

The matter is being probed by CBI. The exam is scheduled to be re-conducted from August 21-September 4.

UP Police Constable Recruitment Examination

Over 48 lakh aspirants, including around 16 lakh women, participated in the UP Police

test conducted to determine eligibility for junior research fellowship and assistant professor and admission to PhD in science courses.

The exam was postponed two days before its schedule citing logistical reasons. The exam is now scheduled from July 25 to 27.

NEET-PG The National Eligibility Entrance Test-Postgraduate (NEET-PG), was cancelled by the Health Ministry a night before the scheduled date as a "precautionary measure". The exam will now be conducted August 11 in two shifts.

CUET-UG The CUET-UG exam conducted in a hybrid mode for the first time across the country was cancelled in Delhi a night before the exam, citing logistical reasons. The exam was conducted in the national capital later.

The results for the exam which were slated to be announced by

June 30 have been delayed. The National Testing Agency (NTA) Sunday announced that it will conduct a retest from July 15 to 19 for candidates whose grievances about conduct of exams are found genuine.

Several candidates, who appeared for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG Monday alleged the responses in the answer keys announced by the NTA are incorrect.

NCET The National Common Entrance Test (NCET) for admission to the 4-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) was scheduled June 12 with over 40,000 candidates slated to appear.

The exam was cancelled after due to technical reasons, the examination could not be initiated at all examination centres and could only commence at a few centres. The exam will now be conducted July 10.



# international



**We need to create the capacity to repay loans. As long as this economy stays import-based, what happens is the moment it heats up, we run out of dollars and we have to go back to the lender of last resort on our knees**  
MUHAMMAD AURANGZEB | FINANCE MINISTER, PAKISTAN

## NAPOLEON'S PISTOLS SOLD

Two pistols that Napoleon Bonaparte once intended to use to kill himself were sold in France for 1.69 million euros (\$1.8 million), the auction house said



### of the day quote

North Korea is clearly a menace to the international society. I hope that Russia will sensibly decide which side, the South or the North, is more important and necessary for its own interests

YOON SUK YEOL | PRESIDENT, SOUTH KOREA

To investors and businesses who spent 14 years doubting whether Britain is a safe place to invest, then let me tell you, after 14 years, Britain has a stable government

RACHEL REEVES | CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, UK

The question is why the enemy kicked off such war drills near the border, suicidal hysteria, for which they will have to sustain terrible disaster

KIM YO JONG | MEMBER OF THE STATE AFFAIRS COMMISSION, NORTH KOREA

### SHORT TAKES

#### Xi Jinping call to world powers

**Taipei:** Chinese President Xi Jinping called on world powers to help Russia and Ukraine resume direct dialogue during a meeting Monday with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, state broadcaster CCTV reported. Orban made a surprise visit to China after similar trips last week to Russia and Ukraine to discuss prospects for a peaceful settlement of more than the two-year war. During his meeting with Xi, Orban described China as a stabilising force amid global turbulence and praised its "constructive and important" peace initiatives.

#### Japan, Philippines sign defence pact

**Manila:** Japan and the Philippines Monday signed a defence pact allowing their troops to enter each other's country for joint military training. The Reciprocal Access Agreement was signed by Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa in a ceremony in Manila witnessed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. It will take effect after ratification by the countries' legislatures. The defence pact with the Philippines is the first to be forged by Japan in Asia.

#### Muharram: Army to be deployed in Pak

**Islamabad:** The Pakistan government Monday decided to deploy the Army across the country to maintain law and order during Muharram, amidst fear of attacks by militant groups on Shiite rallies. Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, began Monday. Shiite Muslims take out rallies during the first ten days of the month to commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam.

#### Lanka SC junks poll delay plea

**Colombo:** The Sri Lankan Supreme Court Monday dismissed a petition seeking to delay the presidential election due to happen later this year until a clarification could be made on the presidential term. A five-member bench dismissed the petition with costs without giving leave to proceed based on arguments by the attorney general. Last week, an individual filed a fundamental rights petition urging the court to hold back the election until a clarification could be made on an ambiguity in the presidential term concerning Articles 30(2) and 82 in the Constitution.

# Surprise Left surge in France

Election results show French voters have chosen to give a broad leftist coalition the most parliamentary seats in pivotal legislative elections, keeping the far right away from power. Yet no party won an outright majority, putting France in an uncertain, unprecedented situation

REUTERS

**Paris, July 8:** France faced a hung Parliament and difficult negotiations starting Monday to form a government, after a surprise left-wing surge blocked Marine Le Pen's quest to bring the far right to power.

The leftist New Popular Front (NFP) emerged as the dominant force in the National Assembly after Sunday's election, but with no single group securing a working majority the possibilities include the NFP forming a minority government or the building of a broad, unwieldy coalition.

The result delivered a blow to President Emmanuel Macron and leaves the euro zone's second largest economy in limbo, heralding a period of political instability just weeks before Paris hosts the Olympic Games.

Macron ended up with a fragmented Parliament, in what is set to weaken France's role in the European Union and further afield, and make it hard for anyone to push through a domestic agenda.

The left won 182 seats, Macron's centrist alliance 168



The left won 182 seats, Macron's centrist alliance 168 and Le Pen's National Rally (RN) and allies 143

and Le Pen's National Rally (RN) and allies 143, Interior Ministry data cited by Le Monde newspaper showed.

"According to the logic of our institutions, Emmanuel Macron should today officially invite the New Popular Front to nominate a Prime Minister," said Green leader Marine Tondelier, one of a number of NFP figures seen as potential candidates for the post. "Will he or won't he? As this President is always full of surprises, we'll see," she said on RTL radio.

**DISSONANT VOICES ON THE LEFT**  
Leaders from the NFP met overnight for first talks on how to proceed, but in media interviews Monday they gave little sense of direction.

## Macron keeps PM in place for stability

French President Emmanuel Macron refused the resignation of the country's Prime Minister, asking him Monday to remain temporarily as the head of the government after chaotic election results left the government in limbo. Prime Minister Gabriel Attal had said he would remain in office if needed but offered his resignation Monday morning. Macron, who named him just seven months ago, immediately asked him to stay on "to ensure the stability of the country." Macron gambled that his decision to call snap elections would give France a "moment of clarification", but the outcome showed the opposite, less than three weeks before the start of the Paris Olympics, when the country will be under an international spotlight.

Tondelier said on France Inter radio the Prime Minister could be someone from the hard-left France Unbowed party, the Greens or the Socialists, the three largest parties in the alliance.

Olivier Faure, the Socialist leader, said on France Info radio that he expected the parties to agree on a plan this week, but

sidestepped a question on whether the NFP would be prepared to negotiate a deal with Macron's centrist camp. Raphael Glucksmann, a prominent moderate who led the leftist ticket in last month's European elections, said Sunday that a hung Parliament required openness for dialogue.

## Across Europe, leaders express relief mixed with concern

Leaders across Europe reacted with relief but also some concern to the results of the snap election in France which leave a key EU country facing the prospect of a hung Parliament and political paralysis. Relief, because the far-right National Rally did not come out as the strongest party, as many pro-European leaders had feared, but also concern, because no political grouping has a majority in the National Assembly. The government in Germany, which together with France has long been viewed as the engine of European integration, expressed relief Monday that the nationalist far right had not topped the polls. "For now, a certain relief prevails that things that we feared have not materialised," Steffen Hebestreit, a spokesperson for German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, told reporters in Berlin. "Only time will tell what happens with this election result and France will decide." "The German-French relationship is a very special one," Hebestreit added. "It is certainly also the core for the fact that we are experiencing Europe in peace and freedom." Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, a former European Union Council head, sounded even more euphoric in his reaction to the election outcome. "In Paris enthusiasm, in Moscow disappointment, in Kyiv relief. Enough to be happy in Warsaw", he wrote late Sunday on X.

# Russian missile hits children's hospital

Defence Ministry of Russia said the strikes targeted Ukrainian defence plants and military air bases



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kyiv, July 8:** A major Russian missile attack across Ukraine Monday killed at least 31 people and injured 154, officials said, with one striking a large children's hospital in the capital of Kyiv, where emergency crews searched the rubble for victims.

The daytime barrage targeted five Ukrainian cities with more than 40 missiles of different types, hitting apartment buildings and public infrastructure, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a social media post. Ukraine's air force said it intercepted 30 missiles.

Strikes in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's birthplace in central Ukraine, killed 10 people and injured 47 in what the head of city administration, Oleksandr Vilkul, said was a massive missile attack. Seven people were killed in Kyiv, authorities said. "It is very important that the world should not be silent about

it now and that everyone should see what Russia is and what it is doing," Zelenskyy said on social media. At the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv, rescuers searched for victims under the rubble of a partially collapsed, two-story wing of the facility. Mayor Vitali Klitschko said at least 16 people, seven of them children, were injured.

On the hospital's main 10-story building, windows and doors were blown out and walls were blackened. Blood spattered the floor in one room. The intensive care unit, operating theatres and oncology departments all were damaged, officials said.

Rescuers searched for children and medical workers in the rubble. Volunteers formed a line, passing bricks and other debris to each other. Smoke still rose from the building, and volunteers and emergency crews worked in protective masks.

The attack forced the evacuation of the hospital and its temporary closure. Some mothers carried their children away on their backs, while others waited in the courtyard with their children as calls to doctors' phones rang unanswered.

## US PREZ RACE 5 Democrats urge Biden to withdraw

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, July 8:** At least five Democratic lawmakers expressed their view Sunday that President Joe Biden should step down from the US presidential election scheduled for November 5, according to multiple news reports.

The lawmakers, Jerry Nadler, Mark Takano, Joe Morelle, Ted Lieu and Adam Smith, expressed their view in this regard during a Democratic Party phone call organised to discuss Biden's disastrous debate performance against his Republican rival, Donald Trump, in Atlanta June 27.

Biden himself has described his performance as a bad night. His approval ratings have come down and his own party colleagues have started questioning his health and ability to govern the country for the next four years. Biden has asserted that he is staying in the race and exuded confidence that he will win the election against Trump in November.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries had convened a virtual meeting of his party colleagues in the House of Representatives to discuss the evolving political scenarios after the June 27 presidential debate between Biden and Trump.

## 22ND INDIA-RUSSIA ANNUAL SUMMIT

# Modi lands in Moscow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Moscow, July 8:** In his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday travelled to Russia to hold summit talks with President Vladimir Putin, a visit that is being seen as having a wider geopolitical context and signalling.

Shortly after landing in Moscow, Modi said he is looking forward to deepening bilateral partnership in futuristic areas and that stronger ties between India and Russia will "greatly benefit our people".

India seeks to play a "supportive role" for a peaceful and stable region, the Prime Minister said in his departure statement.

Modi was received at the Vnukovo-II airport by Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov. The Russian first deputy minister also accompanied the Indian Prime Minister to his hotel from the airport, officials said.

On Tuesday, Modi will co-chair the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with President Putin, interact with the members of the Indian community and visit the Rosatom pavilion at an exhibition.

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to lay a wreath at the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier".



**Stronger ties between our nations will greatly benefit our people**  
NARENDRA MODI | PM, INDIA

The focus of the 22nd India-Russia annual summit is likely to be boosting bilateral cooperation in the areas of energy, security, trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges. The Ukraine conflict is set to figure in the discussions.

In the talks, Modi is expected to urge the Russian side to end recruitment of Indians as support staff to the Russian military and ensure the return of those still operating in the force.

"Landed in Moscow. Looking forward to further deepening the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between our nations, especially in futuristic areas of cooperation,"

Modi said on 'X'. "Stronger ties between our nations will greatly benefit our people," he said.

It is Modi's first trip to Russia since 2019, the first after the start of the Ukraine conflict in February 2022 and the first in Modi's third term as the Prime Minister. Russian President Putin is set to host a private dinner for Modi tonight.

"PM is set to hold substantive discussions with President Vladimir Putin to take forward the special partnership between the two countries. He will also interact with the Indian community in Russia," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on 'X'.

India has not yet condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine and consistently pitched for resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

# June warmest on record across five continents

12th consecutive month that breached 1.5 degree Celsius threshold: EU agency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** With millions of people across five continents experiencing scorching heat last month, the European Union's climate agency, Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), confirmed Monday that June was the warmest on record.

It also marked the 12th consecutive month of global temperatures reaching or breaking the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold. According to C3S ERA5 data, every month since June last year has been the warmest such month on record.

At the 2015 UN climate talks in Paris, world leaders committed to limiting the global average

temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. However, a permanent breach of the 1.5-degree Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement refers to long-term warming over a 20 or 30 year period.

Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by around 1.2 degrees Celsius compared to the average in 1850-1900 due to the rapidly-increasing concentration of greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This warming is considered to be the reason behind record droughts, wildfires and floods worldwide.

According to the EU's climate agency data, June 2024 was the warmest on record, with an average surface air temperature of 16.66 degrees Celsius, 0.67 degree Celsius above the 1991-2020 average for the month and 0.14



degree Celsius above the previous high set in June 2023.

It was also the 13th consecutive month of record-high temperatures, a result of the combined effect of the 2023-24 El Nino event and human-caused climate change. While unusual, a similar streak of monthly global temperature records happened previously in 2015-16.

"This is more than a statistical oddity and highlights a large

and continuing shift in our climate. Even if this specific streak of extremes ends at some point, we are bound to see new records being broken as the climate continues to warm. This is inevitable, unless we stop adding greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and the oceans," said Carlo Buontempo, the director of C3S.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said the lat-

**it is important to stress that temporary breaches do not mean that the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal is permanently lost because this refers to long-term warming over at least two decades**

CELESTE SAULO | WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION SECRETARY-GENERAL

est figures from the C3S unfortunately highlight that "we will be exceeding the 1.5 degrees Celsius level on a temporary basis" with increasing frequency, on a monthly basis. "However, it is important to stress that temporary breaches do not mean that the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal is permanently lost because this refers to long-term warming over at least two decades," she said.

The world's sea surface temperature (SST) in June was also the highest ever recorded for

the month. This is the fifteenth month in a row that the SST has been the warmest in the ERA5 data record for the respective month of the year.

Several countries experienced record-breaking heat and devastating floods and storms in June. According to an analysis by Climate Central, an independent group of scientists and communicators based in the United States, more than 60 per cent of the world population faced extreme heat that was made at least three times more likely by climate change during June 16-24.

Climate Central said the blistering heat in June impacted 61.9 crore people in India, 57.9 crore in China, 23.1 crore in Indonesia, 20.6 crore in Nigeria, 17.6 crore in Brazil, 17.1 crore in Bangladesh, 16.5 crore in the US, 15.2 crore in Europe, 12.3 crore in Mexico, 12.1 crore in Ethiopia and 10.3 crore in Egypt.



# business



**Main quote**  
Through our sustained efforts in green logistics, we have achieved outstanding results including cumulative reduction of 10,000 metric tonne of CO2 emissions and 270 million litre of cumulative fuel savings

HISHISA TAKEUCHI | MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA MD AND CEO

## PLI FOR ACS, LED LIGHTS

The government Monday said it will reopen the application window for the PLI scheme for white goods, including ACs and LED lights, for 90 days from July 15 to October 12. The industry has an appetite to invest more under the production linked incentive (PLI) scheme, the commerce and industry ministry said



## of the day quote

Other quotes Since the economy is doing well, continuity is very important. Feasible reforms that improve the supply-side and build on technology and youth advantage are required

ASHIMA GOYAL | RBI'S MPC MEMBER

We need to bring all the products which make sense because the brand is up and running with the models...the more cars you have, the bigger brand you are...

PETR JANEBA | SKODA AUTO INDIA BRAND DIRECTOR

Some FPOs are standing on their feet in three years, while some are struggling. We will conduct a thorough review of all FPOs to understand their progress and identify gaps where they need additional support

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHAUHAN | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

# Time to push divestment of PSBs, says SBI report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** The government should go ahead with disinvestment of public sector banks (PSBs) as they are in good condition, SBI said in its research report Monday.

The report also pitched for the consolidation of existing government-owned banks.

"As banks are in good condition, the government should take stance on disinvestment of PSBs," the report titled 'Prelude to Union Budget 2024-25' said.

With regard to the privatisation of IDBI Bank, it said the government and Life Insurance Corporation of India are selling an almost 61 per cent stake in the lender.

"They invited bids from buyers in October 2022. In January 2023, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) received several expressions of interest for the IDBI Bank stake on offer. We expect the government to clarify this in the Budget," it said.

Presently, the government owns over 45 per cent stake in IDBI Bank, and LIC has a 49.24 per cent shareholding.

The report also recommended that the government should tweak the tax on deposit interest and make flat tax treatment across the maturity ladder in line with mutual fund and equity markets.

"Household net financial savings has declined to 5.3 per cent of GDP in FY23 and is expected to be 5.4 per cent in FY24. If we make deposit rate attractive in line with MFs, then this could push up household financial savings and CASA," it said.

As this amount will be in the hands of depositors, the report said, it could unleash additional spending and thereby, more GST revenue to the government.

"Increase in bank deposits will bring not only stability in



core deposit base and financial system but also financial stability in household savings as the banking system is better regulated and having a superior trust as compared to other alternatives with high volatility/risk," it said.

Deposits are taxed on an accrual basis and other asset classes only on redemption and there is also a need to remove this treatment, it added.

The report by the Economic Research Department, State Bank of India (SBI), expressed expectation that the government will look into the concerns over the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) that must be improved and expediting cases under the IBC should be a key change.

Recoveries through IBC in FY24 were 32 per cent, and financial creditors lost 68 per cent of their claims. The time taken to reach a resolution is 863 days instead of the stated 330 days, it said.

"IBC is a crucial pillar for a vibrant secondary market for stressed assets. But for this market to take off, the pool of prospec-

tive resolution applicants needs to widen. In this regard, the introduction of the Special Situation Funds (SSFs) by Sebi has been a promising start," it added.

Going forward, the report said, policymakers need to make the regulatory regime on SSFs more attractive for stressed asset investors.

The opinion expressed in the report is of the research team and does not necessarily reflect those of the bank or its subsidiaries, according to the SBI report.

In a separate Budget recommendation, Akshat Khetan, founder of AU Corporate and Legal Advisory Services made a case for enhancing budget allocations for promoting mediation, arbitration, and other ADR methods to reduce the burden on traditional courts.

The Budget should also emphasise reforms related to commercial courts, insolvency and bankruptcy code, and other critical areas, he said.

The Budget 2024-25 is expected to be presented in Parliament on July 23 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

## Budget should offer tax relief, says India Inc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** The Union Budget FY25 should focus on offering relief to taxpayers, especially in the lower income brackets, to stimulate consumption, industry players suggested.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the full Budget for fiscal 2024-25 on July 23 which will be the first major policy document of the new government.

The industry also urged the finance minister to lower corporate tax, phase out tax exemptions, and broaden tax base to boost economic growth.

"Rationalise and simplify the tax system to improve compliance and promote investment. Consider measures such as reducing corporate tax rates, phasing out tax exemptions, and broadening the tax base to make the tax regime more efficient and equitable," ASSOCHAM said.

Rating agency ICRA said the government is likely to set a fiscal deficit target at 4.9-5 per cent for FY25, as against 5.1 per cent estimated in the Interim Budget on February 1, without compromising the capital expenditure target of Rs 11.1 lakh crore.

"While favourable developments on the revenue front portend positively for the fiscal dynamics in FY2025, ICRA believes that fiscal consolidation will turn quite challenging beyond the current fiscal," the rating agency said.

Mayank Gupta, co-founder and COO of Zopper Insurtech said the Budget is expected to focus on policies to promote economic growth and offer relief especially for the lower income brackets to stimulate consumption.

"From the point of view of insurance, we suggest amending section 80C of the Income Tax Act to permit a greater limit on insurance premium payments, thereby encouraging more individuals to buy insurance products. Additionally, there should also be an allowance of deduction for term life insurance under the new tax regime," he said.

# DEALS SOAR TO NEW HEIGHTS



REUTERS

**Mumbai, July 8:** Indian deal-making activity soared to new heights in the second quarter of 2024 (Q2 2024), according to Grant Thornton Bharat Dealtracker.

The second quarter of 2024 witnessed a record-breaking 501 deals valued at \$21.4 billion, marking the highest quarterly volume since Q2 2022. Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) and PE deals together stood at 467, valued at \$14.9 billion. This translates to a 9% increase in volumes but a 28% decrease in values compared to the previous quarter, primarily due to the absence of mega-mergers like the Reliance-Disney deal in Q1 2024.

The quarter saw a significant rise in high-value deals (over USD 100 million), with 30 transactions compared to only 19 (including three billion-dollar deals) in Q1 2024, reflecting a 58% increase.

"Indian corporates are increasingly investing domestically, reflecting strong confidence in the local investment climate. Despite declining cross-border deals due to geopolitical instability, traditional sectors grew in volumes over the previous quarter. With recent election results and anticipated policy clarity from the upcoming budget, political stability is expected to boost investor confidence and drive deal activity in the next six months," said Grant Thornton in a report.

Traditional sectors like pharmaceuticals and manufacturing witnessed strong deal ac-

tivity in Q2 2024, collectively contributing nearly half of the total deal values.

Domestic deals lead growth: M&A activity saw 132 deals worth \$6.2 billion in Q2 2024. This indicates a slight increase in volumes but a significant 50% decline in values compared to Q1 2024. Domestic deals were the primary driver, with a 29% rise in volumes and a 2.5-fold increase in values compared to the previous quarter. Four high-value deals by the Adani Group in the industrial materials and ports sectors significantly influenced this growth, accounting for 52% of the total M&A value in Q2 2024.

Cross-Border Deals Decline: Conversely, cross-border M&A deals experienced a decline, with volumes decreasing by 24% and values plummeting by 85% compared to Q1 2024.

Deal of the quarter: Ambuja Cement's acquisition of a 100% stake in Penna Cements worth USD 1.3 billion. This deal will increase Adani Cement's market share by 2% across India and 8% in South India.

PE Deals surge in value and volume: PE investment witnessed significant growth in Q2 2024, recording 335 deals valued at USD 8.7 billion. This translates to a 9% increase in volume and a 55% increase in value since Q1 2024. This quarter marked the highest volumes since Q2 2022, and second highest values with 21 high-value deals (≥ USD 100 million) accounting for 68% of the total PE values.

## SHORT TAKES

### MobiKwik becomes largest Wallet player

**New Delhi:** MobiKwik has become the largest digital financial services platform in terms of PPI Wallet transactions by value for April and May, the company said Monday. Quoting Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, MobiKwik said it has gained its market share in financial transactions through the Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) Wallet during the two months. The company saw its market share by value grow from 11 per cent in March 2024 to 20 per cent in April and further to 23 per cent in May. According to MobiKwik Co-founder & CFO Upasana Taku, the new product Pocket UPI has played a significant role in expanding its reach and bringing ease of payment to the users. Pocket UPI offers users a seamless way to make instant payments through their Wallets across the UPI network without linking their bank account, further helping users manage their finances effectively.

### Mercedes-Benz sales surge

**New Delhi:** German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz Monday reported a 9 per cent growth in sales at 9,262 units in India in the first half of 2024, its highest ever half-yearly sales in the country, riding on strong demand across categories and availability of volume models. The company had posted sales of 8,528 units in the January-June period of 2023, which was its previous highest half-yearly sales. Mercedes-Benz India said in a statement. It plans to launch six new products in the second half (H2) of 2024. SUV penetration was at 55 per cent in H1 2024, while the TEV (top-end vehicle) segment priced above Rs 1.5 crore comprised 25 per cent of total sales, it added.

### L&T bags solar projects in ME

**New Delhi:** Larsen & Toubro Monday said its renewable energy arm has bagged two orders from a leading developer in the Middle East to build two Gigawatt scale Solar PV plants. "The renewable arm of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has finalised mega orders with a leading developer in the Middle East to build two Gigawatt scale Solar PV plants," the company said in a regulatory filing. L&T did not reveal the financial details of the contract, but as per its project classification, the value of a mega order ranges between Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 crore. The plants will have a cumulative capacity of 3.5 GW.

## BIZ BUZZ

### PGL Honda opens new service centre

**Bhubaneswar:** PGL Honda is pleased to announce the opening of its new authorised service centre in Sundarpada. This new branch, an extension of the main dealership located at Baramunda, joins other branches in Jankia and Jatni, fulfilling a longstanding commitment to serve all PGL Honda customers across geography. PGL Honda's new 3S facility—offering Sales, Service, and Spares—brings together all three essential facets of a two-wheeler dealership under one roof. This state-of-the-art outlet has been designed according to the latest visual identity standards of Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India, promising a more advanced and futuristic customer experience than our existing showrooms. Customers visiting the new Sundarpada showroom will find the latest technology, superior infrastructure, and a comfortable environment, ensuring their vehicles receive top-notch service consistently. This facility is a testament to our commitment to providing the best in customer service and convenience. The inauguration ceremony was graced by distinguished guests from Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India - Rajesh Chowdhry, Zonal Head - Sales; Shiv Pratap Singh, Zonal Head - Service; Rajkamal Roy, Area Manager - Sales; and Anirban Bhattacharya, Area Manager - Service along with Directors of PGL Group Pushpa Devi Agarwal, Pritha Agarwal & Kamal S. Agarwal.



# Markets end flat amid muted trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, July 8:** Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended almost flat Monday amid a lacklustre trade as investors preferred to stay on the sidelines in the absence of any fresh trigger.

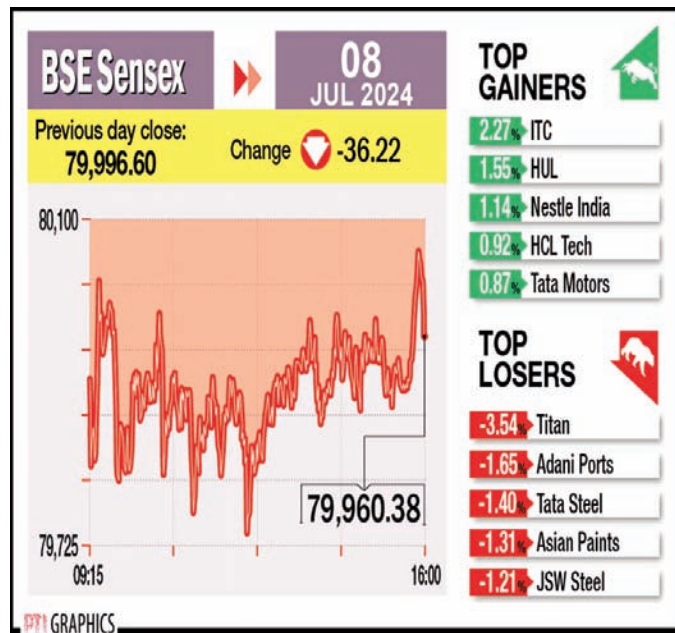
Weak cues from Asian markets also added to the muted trend in domestic equities.

After beginning the trade on a weak note, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 36.22 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 79,960.38. During the day, it went lower by 264.77 points or 0.33 per cent to 79,731.83.

The NSE Nifty dipped 3.30 points or 0.01 per cent to 24,320.55. Among the Sensex pack, Titan, Adani Ports, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, UltraTech Cement, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv were the biggest laggards.

ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle, HCL Technologies and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

"The market is turning to a



consolidation phase due to the absence of major triggers to support the current premium valuation in the near term, prompting investors to book some profits. The earnings sea-

son is around the corner; and the initial expectation is subdued," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the

BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.22 per cent while midcap dipped 0.14 per cent.

Among the indices, consumer durables tanked 1.46 per cent, metal (0.80 per cent), telecommunication (0.78 per cent), services (0.69 per cent), auto (0.63 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.53 per cent).

Energy, capital goods, oil & gas, IT and tech were the winners.

"Due to lack of any fresh trigger, markets witnessed a range-bound session throughout the day and ended marginally weak owing to select profit-taking in banking, telecom and realty shares. Weak Asian cues also weighed on sentiment, while stretched valuations could see investors maintain caution for some time," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.97 per cent to USD 85.70 a barrel.

# Ola CEO nudges Indian developers to exit Google Maps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 8:** Ola founder and CEO Bhavish Aggarwal Monday nudged Indian developers to shun Google Maps and wooed them with one-year free access to Ola Maps, as the noted tech entrepreneur highlighted how its in-house navigation tool is 'outperforming' rivals on key metrics.

Aggarwal's latest post offering sweeteners for Indian developers to try out Ola Maps comes within days of his announcement that Ola has exited Google Maps and shifted to its in-house navigation tools and technologies for cab opera-

tions. The top honcho of Ola who has in the past championed the cause of India's digital sovereignty argued that the Western apps to map India have been used for "too long".

Stating that such systems fail to recognise unique challenges such as street names, urban changes and complex traffic, Aggarwal asserted that Ola Maps tackles these issues with AI-powered India-specific algorithms and real-time data from millions of vehicles.

"After #ExitAzure, it's time for Indian developers to #ExitGoogleMaps! 1 YEAR FREE access to all developers



to Ola Maps on @Krutrim, more than Rs 100 crore in free

credits!" he wrote in the X post. He claimed that the in-

house tool is outperforming competitors on location accuracy, Search accuracy, Search latency and other key metrics.

Aggarwal's post shared a 'deep dive' blog on Ola Maps. "We've been using Western apps to map India for too long and they don't get our unique challenges: street names, urban changes, complex traffic, non-standard roads etc. Ola Maps tackles these with AI-powered India-specific algorithms, real-time data from millions of vehicles, leveraging and contributing massively to open source (5 million plus edits just last year!)," accord-

ing to his post. The Ola founder in May this year announced that Ola will snap ties with Microsoft's Azure cloud and shift workloads to cloud service of its sister firm Krutrim AI.

Last week, Aggarwal declared that Ola Cabs has fully exited Google Maps and will be using its own in-house Ola Maps, leading to lucrative savings for the company.

"After Azure exit last month, we've now fully exited Google Maps. We used to spend Rs 100 crore a year but we've made that zero this month by moving completely to our in-house Ola maps!" he said.



# France face Spain challenge

HIGH-SCORING SPAIN FACES FRANCE WITH A SPOT IN THE EURO 2024 FINAL ON THE LINE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Munich, July 8: France go into Tuesday's Euro 2024 semi-final showdown against Spain hoping Kylian Mbappe can finally produce a performance worthy of his superstar status at a tournament in which he has struggled to find form and fitness.

The match pits one of the highest-scoring teams at the tournament against one of the lowest as France's star forward Kylian Mbappe has struggled to get to grips with his mask.

The match is a mouthwatering prospect and a huge occasion in particular for Mbappe, in his first major tournament captaining his country and just before he starts a new chapter in his career at Real Madrid.

At 25, and having just completed his dream move to the Champions League winners, Mbappe should be in the prime of his footballing life.

But the man who won the World Cup as a teenager and scored an incredible hat-trick in the 2022 final in Qatar, has not been able to play anywhere



near his best at the European Championship.

Mbappe joined up with the France squad after a difficult final campaign at Paris Saint-Germain which was marred by a slightly messy divorce from the club as his playing time was reduced.

Already floundering to some

extent physically, lacking his usual explosive edge, a broken nose in Les Bleus' opening game at the tournament against Austria has further diminished him.

He has scored just once, from a penalty, at the Euros and it may be no exaggeration to say his performance in Friday's quarter-

The winner will play England or the Netherlands in the final Sunday in Berlin. Their semifinal is Wednesday

final against Portugal in Hamburg was the worst of his career in such a big game.

Mbappe ended up being substituted halfway through extra time -- he later admitted he was simply exhausted -- and so watched from the sidelines as his teammates won on penalties.

"He might not have been here at all, so we need to look at it in a positive light," coach Didier Deschamps told broadcaster TF1 Sunday.

"Kylian is here, even if he is not at 100 percent, and I know that has an impact on the opposition who are forced to adapt to him."

Whether Spain are too worried is yet to be found out, with Mbappe clearly inhibited by the protective mask he has to wear over his injured nose.

There is little prospect of him

challenging for a header, and he has indicated that his field of vision is reduced by the mask.

His poor form, along with that of vice-captain Antoine Griezmann, helps explain why France have scored just three goals in five games on their run to the semi-final -- one being Mbappe's penalty against Poland and the other two coming via own goals.

The teams have met 36 times, with Spain winning 16 to France's 13 -- including five of the past eight.

This is Spain's sixth European Championship semifinal. It has only once failed to advance to the trophy match, losing on penalties to eventual champion Italy at Euro 2020.

France has reached the semifinals on five previous occasions, winning three.

France has reached the final in three of last four major tournaments, losing 1-0 after extra time to Portugal at Euro 2016 and to Argentina on penalties in the 2022 World Cup, but beating Croatia to claim its second world title in 2018.

## Musetti makes it 3 Italians in Wimbledon quarters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



London, July 8: Lorenzo Musetti just needed a little time to adjust. To life and to 6-foot-8 Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard's serve.

Musetti advanced to the first Grand Slam quarterfinals of his career Monday at Wimbledon by beating the 21-year-old Frenchman 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-2.

Musetti joins No 1 Jannik Sinner and women's No 7 Jasmine Paolini in collectively making Italian history: it's the first time three Italians have reached the quarterfinals at the same Grand Slam.

The No 25-seeded Musetti dropped to the grass when Mpetshi Perricard sent a forehand long to end a 30-stroke rally and the match. His back to the ground, the 22-year-old Italian's chest heaved.

After an up-and-down season, Musetti is on quite a roll at the All England Club. He became a father in March.

"It's been almost a year, really challenging with a lot of new experiences with the pregnancy of my girlfriend, and becoming a father. A lot of things happened and changed," Musetti said in an on-court interview.

"I needed more time to find a balance on everything."

He needed a set to find a balance on the hard-serving Mpetshi Perricard, who amassed 105 aces in three victories to reach the fourth round. Monday was his birthday.

Musetti converted five of 15 break-point opportunities.

"Such a big day for me. I'm really happy and proud of this win against a really tough opponent. I struggled a little bit at the beginning -- huge serve," he said. "You can imagine how tough it is to return on that. I'm a little bit shaking still."

Musetti will next face either No 4 Alexander Zverev or No 13 Taylor Fritz.

## SHORT TAKES

### Thompson wins John Deere Classic



Silvis (US): Davis Thompson had been working toward a moment like this, and he wasn't about to let anything stop him -- not a soft golf course that produced the best scores of the week, not the pressure of trying to win for the first time on the PGA Tour. He started with a two-shot lead. Six holes into the final round Sunday, Thompson had five birdies and had stretched his lead to six shots and was on his way to a four-shot victory, a spot in the next three majors and the lowest 72-hole score in the John Deere Classic.

"I'm just thankful it worked out. I got off to a great start today and was able to just kind of cruise on the back nine," Thompson said after closing with a 7-under 64.

"Getting off to a good start was crucial, and I was just able to ride the momentum coming in." Thompson made a 45-foot birdie putt on the first hole for a three-shot lead, and no one got closer to him the rest of the way. The 25-year-old from Georgia finished at 28-under 256 to break by one the John Deere Classic record set by Michael Kim in 2018.

### Thomas logs first Top-10 finish

Rabat (Morocco): India's Rayhan Thomas, playing only his second professional event, got a big boost in his career as he finished in Top-10 at the \$2 million International Series Morocco golf tournament here. The Indian golfer, who is based in Dubai but played college golf in the US, shot 69-73-69-72 to finish 9-under for the week and was tied eighth and the best Indian in the field. Of the 16 India who started only five made the cut. The next best Indian on the final leaderboard was Veer Ahlawat (73) who was T-29, while Olympic bound Gaganjeet Bhullar (79) was T-33 alongside Varun Chopra (74) and Rashid Khan (74) was T-37. Thomas, who played for India six times at the prestigious Asia Pacific Amateurs with a best of second place, made his pro debut last month at the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Wichita Open, where he made the cut and finished T-68.

### Jayasuriya to lead Lanka against India

Colombo: Former captain Sanath Jayasuriya was Monday named the interim head coach of Sri Lanka's cricket team ahead of this month's white-ball home series against India with the country's board saying that he is "well-positioned" to guide the side till a "permanent solution" is found in the next few months. The Indian team will be touring Sri Lanka for three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs, starting July 27. Jayasuriya, who has also served as a chief selector in the past, will continue in the post till Sri Lanka's Test tour to England in August-September, comprising three games.

## Never give up, fight till last moment: Sreejesh's learning from Rohit's men



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, July 8: Playing in his fourth and probably last Olympics, veteran India hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has learnt a valuable lesson from the T20 World Cup-winning cricket team -- 'never give up and celebrate' early and this is something which will be embedded in his mind in the Paris Olympics.

The Indian cricket team rose from the ashes in the final of the T20 World Cup, snatching a seven-run victory over South Africa from the jaws of defeat to end an 11-year ICC title drought.

India's last major ICC title was the Champions Trophy in 2013 under Mahendra Singh Dhoni's leadership.

"I did watch the final. The biggest learning from this World Cup is that don't celebrate before the last ball. South Africa was almost winning till the 15th over but the Indian team did not give up hope and snatched the win from the jaws of defeat," Sreejesh, who has 328 India caps, told PTI Bhasha.

"That's what not only us (hockey team) but every Olympic-bound athlete can learn from

our cricket team is that never give up, just wait and fight till the last moment, you will achieve it. I will remember this in the Olympics," he said.

Regarded as the "The Wall of Indian hockey", Sreejesh still remembers that one advice he got from "The Wall of Indian cricket", Rahul Dravid.

"I met Dravid bhai long back. He told us about the importance of patience and waiting for your moment. That's what I did. I did not become one of the best goalkeepers in the world overnight. I waited for my opportunities. I have also learnt to remain humble from him," he said.

Sreejesh started playing hockey to get grade marks in the board exams but went on to win an Olympic medal -- bronze in Tokyo -- and also became the only goalkeeper from the country to feature in four Olympics.

"It's a great honour, a proud moment but comes with a lot of responsibilities. You need to guide the youngsters, you need to keep the team together and help to achieve the common goal of winning a medal at the Olympics," said the former FIH player of the year.

## Mentor Yuvraj was very happy when I got out for duck: Abhishek

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Harare, July 8: India opener Abhishek Sharma has revealed that his mentor Yuvraj Singh was delighted when he got out for a duck on his T20I debut against Zimbabwe here as the swash-buckling former all-rounder, for reasons best known to him, felt it was a "good start".

Making his India debut, Abhishek was out on duck as the Men in Blue lost the first T20I against hosts Zimbabwe by 13 runs Saturday. But the 23-year-old came back strongly to set the stage ablaze with a blistering maiden century (a 47-ball 100) to fashion India's 100-run win in the second game a day later.

"I spoke to him yesterday (Saturday) also, and I don't know why he was very happy when I got out on zero. He said that's a good start but he must be very happy and proud just like my family," Abhishek said in a video posted by BCCI.

He credited the hero of India's 2011 World Cup triumph for not only helping him hone his skills on the cricket field but also supporting him in his life away from the field.

After Sunday's game, Abhishek called Yuvraj, who couldn't be happier for the youngster.

"Well done very proud, you deserve it. Many more (such innings) to come this is just the start," Yuvraj said.

Since there was no rest day in



It's all because of him as well, the hard work he has put in (shaping) me. (For) two-three years, he has worked really hard not only on my cricket but off the field as well

ABHISHEK SHARMA | INDIA OPENER

between the first two games, the visitors didn't get a lot of time to think about the opening loss and that worked in India's favour as they levelled the five-match series 1-1.

"We lost yesterday but I felt, today is my day and I should take the match to the end, the positive was that we didn't have much time to think about the next game," he pointed out.

Abhishek combined with Ruturaj Gaikwad (77 not out off

47 ball) for a match-winning 137-run stand for the second wicket.

"I was in a flow, and just wanted to express myself. I spoke to Rutu as well, he said the same thing that 'don't think much about the balls and hit what you think you can'," he said.

He once again thanked India skipper on the tour and his Punjab teammate Shubman Gill for lending him his bat.

"Special thanks to Shubman who timely gave me his bat, this was a much-needed innings for me and the team. This has been going on from U-14 times. Whenever I play with his bat I have done well, today also, the same happened. I played with his bat only, which I got after a lot of difficulty, he doesn't give it easily. That is like my last option when I feel I have to play with his bat for a comeback," he quipped.

## Maldives invites T20 champs to celebrate triumph



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Male, July 8: The recently-crowned T20 world champion Indian cricket team has been invited to celebrate its triumph in Maldives by the country's tourism association and its marketing and public relations corporation.

The Rohit Sharma-led Indian team won the trophy in Barbados after beating South Africa by seven runs in the final June 29.

"Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/ Visit Maldives) in collaboration with the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) have jointly extended a special and open invitation to the Indian National Cricket Team," the two bodies said in a joint statement. Ibrahim Shiuree, the CEO and

Managing Director of MMPRC, and Ahmed Nazeer, Secretary General of MATI, said they look forward to hosting the team, which returned to India Thursday last week.

It was welcomed by frenzied fans in both Delhi and Mumbai, which also played host to a victory parade featuring lakhs of supporters.

"We would be honoured to host you and ensure that your stay is filled with memorable moments, relaxation, and bespoke experiences," Shiuree and Nazeer said in the joint statement.

They said the invitation also highlights the strong and long-standing cultural and sporting ties between the Maldives and India.

"It would be an immense honour for the Maldives to welcome the Indian Cricket Team

and share in the joy of their triumph," Shiuree further said.

"We eagerly await the opportunity to host them, offering the perfect setting for them to create lasting memories of their victory celebration," he added.

The team is currently on a break. Its next international assignment is a six-match limited-overs series against Sri Lanka beginning July 27. The series comprises three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals.

### CHARTERED FLIGHTS FOR DIE-HARD FANS

WASHINGTON: Die-hard cricket fans took the services of chartered flights to move from one venue to the other during the just concluded T-20 World Cup that was co-hosted by the United States and the West Indies. As a large number of Indian fans were scrambling to reach from one venue to another at a short notice, in particular during the Super 8 and knockout stages in the Caribbean, Crickbuster, the official OTA (online travel agency) for the International Cricket Council (ICC), hired a special

chartered plane, its officials said. "During the Super 8 and knockout stages in the Caribbean, fans often encountered significant difficulties in securing flights and hotel accommodations due to overwhelming demand. Recognising this pervasive challenge,

Crickbuster intervened with a seamless solution. We arranged chartered flights, ensuring fans had reliable and convenient transportation to and from the matches," Florida-based Crickbuster said in a statement.

