

# Dumani Mail

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## Outgoing Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi hands over charge to General Dhiraj Seth

New Delhi: General Dhiraj Seth, an accomplished military officer with the rare distinction of heading two operational Army commands along the western front, took charge as the new Chief of the Army Staff on Tuesday, officials said. "Gen Seth assumed the reins of the 1.3 million-strong force at a time when it is forging a path to become a self-reliant and future-ready Army while meeting challenges on the borders. "The general officer succeeded General Upendra Dwivedi, who retired on Tuesday after an illustrious career spanning over 40 years in the armed forces. "Gen Seth is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla. He was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986. "Prior to becoming the 31st Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), he served as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff. "Gen Seth took over as the COAS at a time when the global geo-strategic environment remains dynamic, with challenges in the security domain becoming more pronounced due to technological advancements and the ever-changing character of modern warfare. "On his elevation to the rank of an Army



Commander, he served as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the South Western Command (based in Jaipur) and the Southern Command, earning the rare distinction of commanding two operational commands along the western front, the defence ministry earlier

said. "During his military career spanning nearly four decades, he has had extensive experience across operational, strategic, capability development and institutional domains, contributing significantly to the Indian Army's combat effectiveness and long-term transformation. "Tenanting pivotal appointments earlier in strategic planning and capability development verticals of the Army Headquarters, he shaped its modernisation trajectory, capability roadmap and long-term force structuring initiatives. "Prior to his appointment as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff on April 1, he headed the Pune-based Southern Command, and under his leadership, the elite command maintained a high degree of operational readiness during the Operation Sindoor last year. In nearly four decades, he built an exceptional operational profile across diverse terrains and conflict environments, including counter-insurgency experience. "The general officer has commanded at every level in diverse operational environments. "His command assignments included an Armoured Regiment in the Desert Sector, an Armoured Brigade in the Western Theatre, and a

Counter-Insurgency Force in Jammu and Kashmir. "As a lieutenant general, he commanded the Sudarshan Chakra Corps, one of the Army's premier strike formations. He subsequently served as General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, overseeing key national and international military engagements and ceremonial responsibilities. "He has held several key staff and strategic appointments that have significantly influenced operational planning, force management and capability development. "Gen Seth's contributions have been instrumental in aligning operational requirements with emerging technologies and future battlefield imperatives, according to the defence ministry. "An accomplished military professional, Gen Seth consistently excelled in professional military education, securing top positions in courses of instruction it said. "A graduate of the Higher Command Course and the National Defence College, Gen Seth also attended the prestigious Command and Staff Course in Paris, reflecting his broad strategic outlook and understanding of contemporary military affairs, the defence ministry said.

### Out for momos, man harasses woman in moving car in Delhi; held

New Delhi: A man was apprehended for allegedly sexually harassing a 24-year-old woman in a moving car under the pretext of going out for momos in east Delhi's Mandawali, police said on Tuesday. "According to the victim, the accused, who was known, allegedly took her out on the pretext of eating momo before diverting the vehicle to a secluded stretch on June 17. "She alleged that during the drive, the man told her to stop for CNG but instead drove towards an isolated area, where he allegedly made obscene remarks, demanded sexual favours and touched her inappropriately, a senior police officer said.

### Rahul Gandhi spreading negativity, undermining India's achievements: BJP



New Delhi: The BJP on Tuesday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of spreading "negativity" and undermining India's achievements, claiming that his repeated predictions of an economic "doom" have been belied by India's economic performance. "The remarks came amid Prime Minister Narendra Modi holding a meeting with secretaries of all central ministries on Tuesday evening. The meeting is expected to cover reform initiatives to improve the ease of living and ease of doing business. "BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla described Gandhi as a "nawab of negativity, champion of cynicism and purveyor of propaganda".

### India strongly condemns air-strikes by Pakistan on Afghan territory : MEA

New Delhi: India has strongly condemned Pakistan's air-strikes in residential areas of Afghanistan that killed 36 civilians, including women and children, and injured 163 others. In a statement, the External Affairs Ministry said that this blatant act of aggression by Pakistan is an assault on Afghanistan's sovereignty and a direct threat to regional peace and stability. It reflects Pakistan's persistent pattern of reckless behaviour and its futile attempt to externalize internal failures through desperate acts of violence beyond its borders. India conveyed its condolences to Afghan families who have lost loved ones and prayed for early recovery of those injured. India reiterated its unwavering support for Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

## Indian Coast Guard rescues six fishermen in Mangaluru search and rescue operation

New Delhi: The Government has decided to withdraw the temporary regulatory measures governing the sale and distribution of Petrol and Diesel. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said that with effect from 1st July, 2026 the temporary measures will be lifted from Motor Spirit and High Speed Diesel through retail outlets of Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies. According to the statement, during the period of disruptions arising from the West Asia crisis, the government continued to shield retail consumers from the sharp increase in international fuel prices by maintaining stable retail prices of petrol and diesel. This led to a significant price difference between retail fuel prices and those applicable to bulk consumers. The Ministry said that to address this situation, the temporary regulatory measures, introduced on 12th of this month, prescribed a temporary limit of 200 litres of High Speed Diesel per customer or vehicle per day at retail



outlets and required industrial, institutional and commercial consumers. The measures were aimed at preventing black marketing, hoarding and diversion of diesel while ensuring uninterrupted availability of petrol and diesel to retail consumers. "Following a review of the supply situation of petroleum products in the country, the Government has concluded that the

temporary regulatory measures are no longer required in the public interest. The temporary measures helped ensure adequate availability of petrol and diesel across the country while safeguarding the interests of retail consumers. Their withdrawal reflects the improvement in the supply situation and the restoration of normal supply arrangements.

## Union Minister Jitendra Singh meets BRICS CCI delegation in New Delhi

New Delhi: BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BRICS CCI) delegation today called on Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh in New Delhi. The meeting focused on strengthening industry-led global engagement and collaboration across the BRICS and BRICS Plus ecosystems through innovation, StartUps, emerging technologies, research collaboration and entrepreneurship. Addressing the meeting, Dr Singh said that India's growing stature as a global innovation hub and its leadership in emerging technologies provide an ideal opportunity for industry organisations to build stronger international partnerships that contribute to national growth and global development. He said that the country has witnessed remarkable progress in sectors such as Space, Biotechnology, Artificial Intelligence, Nuclear Energy and Deep Technology, opening new avenues for global collaboration. Dr Singh also



encouraged the Chamber to deepen its engagement with the wider BRICS ecosystem through sector-specific meetings, innovation forums and thematic engagements. He also invited the Chamber to identify focused areas of cooperation aligned with India's scientific and technological priorities and develop sector-specific proposals that

could facilitate productive engagement with the concerned departments and institutions. During the meeting BRICS CCI also shared its ongoing initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, trade facilitation, women-led enterprises, research collaboration and business networking among BRICS and BRICS Plus ecosystems.

## Government announces major initiatives to strengthen Indian film industry

New Delhi: Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry has announced two major decisions aimed at boosting the Indian film industry. The decisions were taken at a high-level review meeting chaired by Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in New Delhi yesterday. The meeting focused on measures to enhance film production, improve distribution networks and integrate emerging technologies into the Indian cinema ecosystem. The Ministry said the initiatives are intended to make Indian cinema more globally competitive while encouraging investment in cinema infrastructure, particularly in smaller



towns and rural areas. A high-level Study Group under the chairmanship of Prasar Bharati Chairman Prasoos Joshi has been formed which will study the opportunities and challenges before

Indian cinema. It will suggest ways to strengthen the sector and recommend measures to make Indian films more competitive globally. The Ministry has also prepared a Model State Cinema Regulations for adoption by States. The rules have been sent to all state governments with a request to adopt them. This move will help build a strong, modern and globally competitive Indian film industry.

## Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari calls for greater public participation in road safety



New Delhi: Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari today noted that the government has identified accident-prone black spots and landslide-prone stretches across the country and has undertaken improvement works with a cost of 50 thousand crore rupees. "Addressing an event on Road Safety in New Delhi, Mr Gadkari stated that efforts are also being made to ensure international-standard road engineering, including proper signage, lane markings and underpasses. The Minister also called greater public participation in promoting road safety. Mr Gadkari also urged motorists to follow traffic rules, avoid overspeeding, wear helmets and seat belts, maintain lane discipline, and refrain from using mobile phones while driving.

## Government extends GSTAT appeal filing deadline till 31 July

New Delhi: The Government has extended the due date for filing of appeals before the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) till 31st of next month. According to the Ministry of Finance, earlier notification dated September last year had notified today (30.06.2026) as the last date for filing of appeals before GSTAT. It is noted that the due date has been extended in view of the recent representations from various stakeholders, highlighting technical difficulties due to the rush to file appeals on the GSTAT portal. The government has also advised taxpayers to plan their appeal filings well in advance and not wait until the deadline.

## SP chief whip in UP Assembly Kamal Akhtar resigns



New Delhi: Samajwadi Party chief whip in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Kamal Akhtar on Tuesday resigned from his post on the directions of party president Akhilesh Yadav. "I have always followed whatever directions I got from the national president, Akhilesh Yadav ji. Whatever direction he will give will be followed," Akhtar told PTI. "Akhtar is an SP MLA from Kanth in Moradabad district. He was made SP's chief whip subsequent to party MLA Manoj Pandey resigning from the post in 2024 after he sided with the BJP candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls.

## Technical snag on Delhi Metro's Blue Line disrupts services

New Delhi: Services on the Delhi Metro's Blue Line between Anand Vihar and Vaishali stations were hit on Tuesday evening due to a technical issue, the DMRC said. Services on other lines are normal, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said in a post on X. "Delay in train services on Blue Line due to technical issue between Anand Vihar and Vaishali from 5.21 pm," it said.

## Anasara Darshan Begins at Alarnath Temple in Odisha's Brahmagiri; Elaborate Security, Traffic Arrangements in Place

Puri: The annual Anasara Darshan commenced at the Shree Alarnath Temple in Brahmagiri on Tuesday, drawing a large number of devotees from across the state. During the 14-day period, Lord Alarnath will be worshipped and offered darshan in the form of Chaturbhuj Narayan, coinciding with the Anasara period of Lord Jagannath in Puri.

The temple administration has completed all preparations for the festival. The temple premises, the presiding deity, the lion sculptures at the Singhadwara, and the Anand Bazaar have been decorated. Installation of the newly erected Aruna Stambha and ceremonial flag-hoisting at the temple have also been completed.

To ensure smooth movement of devotees, barricades have been installed across the temple premises. Under the traffic plan, devotees will walk to the temple from the Gop Chhak main road. Parking for VIP and VVIP vehicles has been arranged at the Yatri



Nivas, while separate parking facilities for two-wheelers and four-wheelers have been created near Chandan Pokhari. A designated parking area has also been earmarked near Pantha Nivas for servitors' vehicles.

According to the traffic

advisory, vehicles from Alarpur village will be diverted through the Indian Overseas Bank Chhak to the national highway. An alternative route via Bhoisahi in Alarpur towards Brahmagiri has also been notified.

Security has been strengthened

following directions from Puri Collector Divyajyoti Parida. More than 50 CCTV cameras have been installed across the temple premises, circumambulatory path, surrounding areas, and parking lots for round-the-clock surveillance. Additional Superintendent of

Police will supervise security arrangements, with deployment of five inspectors, 17 officers, eight platoons of police personnel, over 70 Home Guards, six traffic police personnel, and two platoons of plainclothes police, Brahmagiri police station IIC Bamadev Swain said.

Heavy vehicles will remain prohibited on designated routes until the conclusion of Anasara Darshan. Traffic restrictions will be in force from Puri Mangala Ghat to Satapada and Khajuria to Brahmagiri between 6 am and 10 pm. Traffic personnel will be deployed at key junctions, including Gop Chhak, Indian Overseas Bank Chhak, Madhuali Kotha, Chandan Pokhari Chhak, and Alarpur Chhak.

The district administration said comprehensive arrangements have been made to ensure the safety, convenience, and orderly darshan of devotees throughout the festival period.

## Deba Snana Purnima Celebrated with Grandeur at Paradip Jagannath Temple



Paradip, (DMS) : The sacred festival of Deba Snana Purnima was celebrated with great religious fervour and devotion at the Jagannath Temple in Paradip on Monday. Thousands of devotees witnessed the traditional ceremonial bathing of the Holy Trinity Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, along with Lord Sudarshan, on the Snana Bedi.

As per age-old rituals, the deities were ceremonially bathed with 108 sacred pots of sanctified water. The Chairman of Paradip Port, P. L. Haranadh, and members of the Jagannath Society offered fragrant sacred water to the deities, following the prescribed temple traditions. The temple servitors (sevayats) then performed the holy bathing

rituals with great devotion.

Following the ceremonial bath, special puja, homa, and other religious rituals were conducted at the Snana Mandap. The deities were subsequently adorned in the magnificent Gajanan Besha (Hati Besha), a revered tradition that drew large numbers of devotees seeking divine blessings.

The celebrations witnessed enthusiastic participation from Jagannath devotees across Paradip. Among others, Paradip Port Deputy Chairman T. Venu Gopal, senior port officials, employees, and members of the Jagannath Society actively took part in the spiritual proceedings, adding to the grandeur and sanctity of the occasion.

## Transport Department Cracks Down During Snana Purnima: 95 Challans Issued, Over 9.85 Lakh Fine Collected



Puri: In a major enforcement drive during the holy Snana Purnima festival, the Transport Department intensified vehicle inspections across all major routes leading to Puri and at key locations within the district to ensure safe, smooth and orderly travel for thousands of devotees.

As part of the special operation, the department's enforcement squads took strict action against vehicles violating provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act. A total of 95 challans were issued, with penalties amounting to ₹9,85,915. The enforcement

targeted offences including overloading of passengers, charging fares above the prescribed rates, operating vehicles without valid driving licences or mandatory documents, and other violations of the Motor Vehicles Act.

Officials said the drive was aimed at safeguarding pilgrims and maintaining disciplined traffic movement during the festival. The Transport Department added that such enforcement and inspection campaigns will continue in the coming days to ensure compliance with transport regulations and enhance road safety.

## Unsafe Deers at JSW Utkal Steel campus

Forest Department & Company authorities silent

Jagatsinghpur : In spite of conditional Forest clearance to JSW Utkal Steels Ltd. to provide safety and shifting of Deers from Company area no adequate arrangement made so far. The Deers are unsafe but Forest department and Company

Environment clearance given to JSW Utkal Steel Ltd. from Forest Environment & Climate change department, Govt. of India letter no. J-11011/524/2017-IA-11-(1)dt. 10/4/22. Out of detected 1253.225 only 1083.691 hect. Land given to JSW Utkal Steel Ltd.



authority are silent. As per information regular death of Deers is a common factor and local people of Dhinkia rescued one Deer to day from Company campus in unsafe condition.

As per information

As per condition Forest department will look after safety and shifting of Deers inside JSW campus. Incase of death of Deers district action will take against Company. DFO, (wild life) Rajnar intimated the facts to Collector, Jagatsinghpur vide letter no. 1140/19/2/26. But at present JSW authorities not allowing Forest employees to enumerate no. of Deers and to rescue unsafe Deers. To-day one

Deer thrush neck into gate of JSW and at the verge of death and local people rescued the deer and handed over to Forest department. People demand to save the life of innocent thousands of Deers inside JSW campus.

## Snana Purnima Celebrated at Ram Mandir Khariar Road

NUAPADA/KHARIAR ROAD : The sacred Snana Purnima festival was celebrated with great religious fervour and devotion at the premises of Ram Mandir Khariar Road in Nuapada district on Monday. The ceremonial Maha Snana (Holy Bath) of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, followed by the rare and divine Gajanan Besha (Elephant Form Attire), attracted a large gathering of devotees from across the region.

The program was organised under the direct supervision of Mandir Committee President Advocate Ramesh Agrawal & Secretary Deo Kumar Sahu.

In the morning, after Mangala Aarti, the deities were ceremonially brought to the Snana Mandap in the traditional Pahandi procession. After the completion of Vedic rituals and worship, the deities were bathed with 108 pitchers of sanctified, fragrant water amidst the chanting of



sacred hymns. Devotees later had the opportunity to offer Jala lagi, a ritual of offering holy water to the deities, and received their divine blessings.

The sacred rituals were performed under the Yajamana (chief patron) couple, Dipak Maharana and his wife. The priests performed the rituals according to traditional temple rituals.

Snana Purnima is one of the

most significant festivals in the Jagannath tradition. It marks the annual ceremonial bathing of the deities before the Rath Yatra.

The grand celebration of Maha Snana, the magnificent Gajanan Besha, and the deeply spiritual atmosphere enriched the religious heritage of Nuapada. Hundreds of devotees visited the temple throughout the day to witness the sacred rituals and seek the blessings of Lord Jagannath.

## First Juang graduate appeal SP against a person trying to defame him

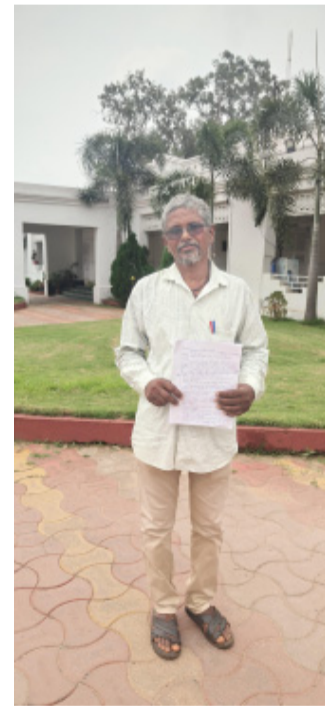
Naresh Chandra Pattanatak: TNN

Keonjhar : Srikant Juang, the first graduate of the Juang tribal community of Gonasika village, is at the doorstep of the Keonjhar SP office Keonjhar demanding to provide security and justice.

Srikant Jhuang (55) of Gonasika village, Guptganga panchayat under Kanjipani police station, has a special distinction as the first Juang primitive tribe matriculate and graduate of the district. He is currently teaching at Gonasika Government Girls' School.

While the death of 13 Juang girls who went to TamilNadu from Keonjhar district for jobs have allegedly been taken by another person named Srikant Juanga. Therefore, without checking and verifying all this, a Sanjib Kumar Sahu from the area under the Sadar police station allegedly posted his photo with giving bad comments in on his social media account.

Although he had written a complaint about this at Kanjipani



police station the previous day, he was forced to tell the SP when he did not take any action he told in front of the media representatives present there. He

alleged that his name and photo were used in a very vulgar manner and posted on Facebook and insulted him in front of everyone. This has damaged the respect and affection towards him in the society. He has insulted the society through his teaching by criticizing him. He has accused the officials and the government of neglecting his duty and has accused him of absconding and alleging that the police department is not looking into this matter. He has mentioned that he has tried to insult and defame the labour department by saying that the local labor officer has a big hand in him.

From the day I started studying till today, I have worked day and night for the development of education of the elderly and school students in Juanga areas. I have been engaged in social service by staying away from drugs and non veg. Therefore, he has appeal to the Keonjhar SP to protect his dignity, honor and provide me with fair justice.

## Retired Champua Block Employee Ganeshwar Giri Sentenced to 2 Years in Jail

Naresh Chandra Pattanatak Keonjhar : The Special Vigilance Court today convicted former Development Clerk and Store In-charge of Champua Block Ganeshwar Giri in a Government Fund Misappropriation Case.

A chargesheet was filed by Odisha Vigilance under sections 409/468/471 IPC and 13(2) r/w 13(1)(c) of the Prevention of

Special Judge Keonjhar Vigilance on Tuesday convicted the accused Shri Giri and sentenced him to 2 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10000.

Corruption Act, 1988, against Ganeshwar Giri (retired) for misappropriating government property and tampering with the

cement stock register of the block from 2007-08 to 2010-11.

Special Judge Keonjhar Vigilance on Tuesday convicted the accused Shri Giri and sentenced him to 2 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10000. After Shri Giri was convicted, the Odisha Vigilance will now apply to the competent authority to stop his pension.

## Snana Yatra: Gajapati Maharaja's Aarti Lamp Goes Out During Ritual, Sparks Discussion Among Devotees

Puri: An unexpected moment during the sacred Snana Yatra of Lord Jagannath drew widespread attention on Sunday after the ceremonial aarti lamp held by Gajapati Maharaja Divyasingha Deb was extinguished by a sudden gust of wind at the Snana Mandap.

The incident occurred while the Gajapati Maharaja was performing the traditional aarti of Lord Jagannath following the completion of the customary Chhera Pahanra ritual at around 3 pm. Moments earlier, he had offered aarti to Lord Balabhadra before proceeding to Lord Jagannath. As the ritual was underway, the flame of the aarti lamp went out unexpectedly due to strong winds.

The ceremony was being broadcast live, and the incident was witnessed by thousands of devotees present at the temple as well as millions watching the telecast, quickly becoming a topic of discussion.

While many devotees viewed it as a natural occurrence caused by the weather, others interpreted it through the lens of

religious belief and symbolism. However, neither the Shree Jagannath

Temple Administration nor temple authorities have issued any official statement or religious interpretation regarding the incident.

Some servitors and local scholars noted that Odisha has witnessed several major challenges in recent years, including cyclones, the Covid-19 pandemic, political change, inflation and global uncertainties. Against this backdrop, the incident has prompted varied reactions and discussions among devotees.

Many worshippers, meanwhile, chose to regard the event as an expression of divine will and offered prayers for the well-being of all and the smooth, successful conduct of the upcoming Rath Yatra.

For now, the incident has generated curiosity and debate among devotees. Temple observers maintain that any religious significance should only be considered after an official or scholarly interpretation, rather than through speculation.

## Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Visit Bargarh and Sambalpur on July 4 and 5

Sambalpur (DMS) : Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Odisha in July, according to information provided by Bharatiya Janata Party state spokesperson and Regional Media Coordinator Manas Ranjan Baxi.

During his visit, Shah will arrive at Veer Surendra Sai Airport on July 4 and travel by road to Bargarh. There, he will inaugurate an ethanol plant built at a cost of ₹1,750 crore. He is also scheduled to address a public meeting after the inauguration.

After completing his Bargarh programmes, the Union Minister will proceed to Sambalpur, where he will stay overnight. On July 5, he will lay the foundation stones for various development projects in Sambalpur and address a party public meeting before returning to



New Delhi.

The programmes will be attended by Union Education Minister and Sambalpur MP Dharmendra Pradhan, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, BJP state president Manmohan Samal, Bargarh MP Pradip Kumar Purohit, along with several state ministers, MPs and MLAs, Baxi said.

## First preparatory meeting held for grand celebration of Lord Biswakarma Puja at Paradip

Paradip :- A high-level preparatory meeting was convened on Tuesday at 05:00 PM in the New Board Room of Paradip Port Authority (PPA) to finalize arrangements for the grand celebration of the upcoming Lord Biswakarma Puja Festival, 2026. The meeting was presided over by Shri Krishna Bapi Raju, Secretary and coordinated by Shri Biswajit Mishra, Senior Assistant Estate Manager (Sr AEM) of PPA. Bringing together key administrative, municipal, and security stakeholders, the session focused on establishing a robust framework for multi-departmental coordination to ensure a seamless, safe, and culturally vibrant experience for the thousands of devotees and visitors expected to congregate in the port township during the festive week.

To streamline administrative logistics, the PPA has set a strict deadline of July 21, 2026, for Puja Pandal Operators to submit applications for open space allotments, which will be valid for a seven-day festival period from September 17 to September 23, 2026. In tandem with these space allocations, the Paradip Municipality and PPA Engineering Department have committed to providing essential utilities, including single-phase electricity for nightly construction work and an uninterrupted supply of drinking water via tankers and tube wells at convenient public venues. Furthermore, rigorous civic sanitation drives, drainage clearances, and the installation of temporary urinals will be actively carried out by the municipality to maintain optimal hygiene across the



festival grounds.

Public safety and law enforcement emerged as top priorities during today's deliberations, with the Paradip Police Station receiving eight dedicated Bolero-type vehicles to manage patrolling and traffic

restrictions around major squares from September 16 to September 25, 2026. Pandal operators are mandated to install 2 to 4 CCTV cameras, maintain wide, well-lit entry and exit gates, and deploy emergency carpenters and electricians

on-site. Fire safety will be strictly enforced through mandatory portable extinguishers and training programs conducted by the CISF Fire Wing, while the PPA Hospital will establish round-the-clock medical care and emergency first-aid

shelters throughout the festival's duration.

In alignment with environmental sustainability goals, the committee has instituted a strict ban on plastic and single-use polythene carry bags for all pandal operators and local shopkeepers, requiring signed undertakings prior to space allotment. Sound regulations will also be heavily monitored, restricting audio systems to sound boxes only and completely banning funnel-shaped loudspeakers to curb noise pollution. Through these comprehensive measures, the Paradip Port Authority and its partner agencies aim to uphold the highest standards of safety, environmental consciousness, and community celebration for the 2026 festival cycle.

## Water Pipeline Work Damages Paver Block Road Built at a Cost of Over 13.56 Lakh

Khordha: A road constructed with public money for the convenience of residents has become a glaring example of poor planning, lack of coordination among government agencies, and alleged negligence in execution and maintenance. The incident, from Gandhi Nagar Colony under Ward No-5 of Khordha Municipality, has sparked widespread resentment among local residents, who have accused the authorities of allowing valuable public infrastructure to be destroyed barely two years after its construction. The paver block road was constructed in 2024 at an estimated cost of ₹13,56,154 under a government-funded development project. According to the official project information board installed at the site, the contractor was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining and repairing the road for a period of three years after completion. However, residents allege that the maintenance clause has remained only on paper, while the actual condition of the road has steadily deteriorated. Local

residents said that within a short period of its completion, cracks began appearing in several portions of the road. Cement filling between the paver blocks started peeling off, numerous blocks gradually sank below the surface, and several stretches became uneven, making movement difficult for pedestrians and vehicles alike. Despite repeated complaints, neither the contractor nor the Khordha Municipality reportedly carried out any repair work. Residents have questioned why the mandatory three-year maintenance provision has not been enforced by the authorities. The situation has worsened considerably after the recent commencement of a drinking water pipeline project in the colony. To lay the underground pipeline, workers excavated the entire stretch of the newly constructed paver block road. During the excavation, a large number of paver blocks were broken, while many others were carelessly removed and left scattered along the roadside. As a result, a road built at a cost of more than ₹13.56 lakh using taxpayers' money has been reduced to a damaged and unusable condition within just two years of its construction. Residents have expressed serious concern over what they describe as a complete waste of public funds. Adding to the controversy, locals alleged that the pipeline work is being carried out without adequate supervision from the concerned contractor, engineers or responsible government officials. According to them, only labourers are seen at the site, digging and removing the paver blocks without any technical guidance or monitoring. They claim that the absence of proper supervision has resulted in unnecessary destruction of public property and reflects gross administrative negligence. Residents have also raised serious questions about public safety during the ongoing construction work. They pointed out that no warning boards, barricades, caution tapes or danger signs have been placed around the excavated portions of the road. The open trenches have become particularly hazardous after sunset, when poor visibility increases the risk of accidents. Local people alleged that several motorcycle riders have narrowly escaped mishaps, while others have reportedly met with accidents due to the absence of adequate safety measures. Another allegation creating concern among residents relates to the handling of the removed paver blocks. Locals claimed that during the night, some unidentified persons have allegedly been transporting the excavated paver blocks using auto-rickshaws and Tata Ace vehicles.

## Rath Yatra preparations in final stage, says Puri Collector

Puri: Preparations for the annual Rath Yatra have entered the final phase, with the district administration putting in place extensive arrangements to ensure a safe, smooth and hassle-free experience for lakhs of devotees, Puri Collector Divya Jyoti Parida said.

Expressing satisfaction over the successful and orderly conduct of the Snana Yatra, the Collector thanked all stakeholders for their cooperation and appealed for similar public support during the upcoming Rath Yatra. He

expressed confidence that, with the blessings of Lord Jagannath and coordinated efforts from all departments, the festival would be conducted seamlessly.

The construction of the three chariots is nearing completion, while infrastructure and civic preparedness have been significantly strengthened. The administration has completed road repairs, installed barricades for crowd management, and made contingency plans for both extreme heat and heavy rainfall, including water sprinkling and drainage arrangements.

To strengthen emergency



response, additional temporary medical camps, doctors, paramedical staff and ambulances have been deployed. Dedicated ambulance corridors have also been planned to facilitate quick

movement during emergencies. The district administration has engaged more volunteers and earmarked designated spaces for voluntary organisations distributing food, drinking water and other

essential services. Arrangements have also been made for adequate drinking water facilities, temporary toilets, expanded parking areas and enhanced traffic management. Security has been intensified with the deployment of additional police personnel, while senior officers have been assigned to monitor various operational aspects of the festival. Information centres and LED display screens will assist pilgrims with real-time guidance and updates.

Special emphasis has also been placed on sanitation, with

additional cleaning staff deployed across the city. Power supply systems have been reinforced, and coordination with transport authorities has ensured the operation of additional trains and buses to handle the expected influx of devotees.

"The government and the district administration have made comprehensive arrangements to ensure that every devotee has a safe, comfortable and memorable darshan of Lord Jagannath during the Rath Yatra," the Collector said.

## National Electrical Safety Week Observed in Khordha

### Awareness Drive Promotes Safe and Responsible Use of Electricity

Khordha: National Electrical Safety Week (NESW) is observed annually across India from June 26th to July 2nd to raise public and industrial awareness about electrical hazards and promote safe practices in home and workplace. In a significant initiative aimed at promoting electrical safety and energy conservation among students, parents and the general public, National Electrical Safety Week was observed with great enthusiasm at BJB High School, Khordha. The programme focused on educating people about the safe, responsible and efficient use of electricity while highlighting the importance of preventing electrical accidents through awareness and precaution.

The programme commenced with a special morning assembly, where students, teachers and staff collectively took a pledge to ensure the safe use of electricity and to actively contribute towards energy conservation. The oath emphasized the importance of adopting safe electrical practices in daily life and using electricity judiciously to protect both lives and natural resources. Following the pledge ceremony, a colourful awareness rally was taken out in and around the school campus. Hundreds of students marched through nearby localities carrying placards, banners and posters displaying powerful slogans on electrical safety and energy conservation. Through their enthusiastic participation, the students appealed to residents to remain cautious while using electrical appliances, avoid unsafe electrical practices and prevent accidents by following basic safety



measures. The rally attracted considerable attention from local residents, many of whom appreciated the students' efforts to spread awareness on such an important public safety issue. As part of the observance, a drawing competition based on the themes of Electrical Safety and Energy Conservation was organised to encourage creative expression among students. A total of 83 students enthusiastically participated in the competition, presenting innovative and thought-provoking artworks depicting safe electrical practices, environmental protection and responsible energy use. The competition served as an effective platform for students to translate their awareness into creative expression while reinforcing the message of safety through art. In the afternoon, a

awareness meeting was organised in the presence of 143 parents, reflecting the growing interest of the community in electrical safety. The meeting was presided over by the Headmaster of the school, Bibhu Prasad Senapati, who welcomed the participants and highlighted the need for collective responsibility in ensuring electrical safety at homes, schools and public places. The Chief Guest, Junior Engineer Ms. Priyanka Sahu from the Electricity Department, delivered an informative and interactive address on the causes of electrical accidents, preventive measures and the importance of adopting safe electrical practices in everyday life. She explained how negligence while handling electrical appliances, damaged wiring, overloaded circuits and unsafe installations often

lead to serious accidents. She also demonstrated simple but effective safety precautions that every household should follow to minimise electrical hazards.

Ms. Sahu further urged parents and students to avoid unnecessary wastage of electricity by switching off electrical appliances when not in use, using energy-efficient equipment and encouraging responsible energy consumption. She stressed that conserving electricity not only reduces electricity bills but also contributes significantly towards environmental protection and sustainable development. An engaging question-and-answer session followed the address, during which parents and students actively interacted with the resource person. Participants raised several practical questions relating to household electrical safety,

emergency response during electrical accidents, children's safety around electrical installations and methods of conserving electricity. The Chief Guest responded to every query with detailed explanations, making the session highly informative and beneficial for all present. To recognise the creativity and awareness displayed by the participants, the top ten winners of the drawing competition were honoured with commemorative mementoes and appreciation for their outstanding performances. The awards motivated students to continue promoting the message of electrical safety within their families and communities. The

programme concluded with all parents taking a solemn pledge to promote electrical safety, prevent electricity-related accidents and practise responsible energy conservation in their daily lives. Teachers, staff members and organisers reaffirmed their commitment to spreading awareness about electrical safety beyond the school campus and encouraging the community to adopt safe electrical habits. The successful observance of National Electrical Safety Week at BJB High School demonstrated how educational institutions can play a vital role in creating public awareness on issues of safety and sustainability. Through interactive activities, community participation and expert guidance, the programme effectively reinforced the message that safe use of electricity is not only a personal responsibility but also a collective social commitment essential for building a safer and more energy-conscious society.

## Ground-Breaking Ceremony of Household Rooftop Solar Installation under PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana.

Sambalpur: Aditya Aluminium, Lapanga, in collaboration with TPWODL, organized the Ground-Breaking Ceremony for Household Rooftop Solar Installation under the ULA Model of the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana at RR Colony, Ludhapali. Under Phase-I, the initiative will benefit 336 households, enabling access to clean, affordable, and renewable solar energy.

The programme was graced by Shri Pritam Tanti, BDO, Rengali; Shri Kishore Sahu, Additional Tahasildar, Rengali; Shri Pratyush Mishra, SDO, Rengali (TPWODL), along



with the TPWODL team; Shri Jagannath Prasad Nayak, Unit Head, Aditya Aluminium; Shri Gulshan Tiwari, CPP Head; Shri Vinoda Nand Thakur, HR Head; Shri Jyoti Prakasha Muduli, CPP; members of the CSR team; and other distinguished guests and villagers.

The initiative marks a significant step towards

promoting renewable energy adoption by reducing household electricity costs, enhancing energy security, and contributing to India's clean energy transition. The event reaffirmed the shared commitment of the district administration, TPWODL, and Aditya Aluminium towards sustainable community development.

## DCM Pravati Parida inaugurates five-day orientation programme for Child Welfare Committee members

Bhubaneswar: Deputy Chief Minister, Smt. Pravati Parida, on Tuesday inaugurated a five-day Orientation Training Programme for the newly appointed Chairpersons and Members of Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), underscoring the State Government's commitment to building a strong, child-centric protection system and ensuring justice, care and rehabilitation for every vulnerable child. "Addressing the inaugural session, the Honourable Deputy Chief Minister said that children are the nation's greatest asset and that protecting their rights is a collective responsibility of the government and society. Reaffirming the State Government's commitment to child welfare, she said Odisha is continuously strengthening its child protection ecosystem through institutional capacity building, improved



service delivery, enhanced monitoring mechanisms and regular training of frontline functionaries. "The five-day orientation programme has been organised by the Odisha State Child Protection Society (OSPCS) under the Women & Child Development Department to equip newly appointed CWC members with the knowledge, legal understanding and practical skills required to effectively discharge their statutory responsibilities under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of

Children) Act, 2015. "The inaugural programme was attended by Dr. Mrinalini Darswal, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Women & Child Development Department and Chairperson, OSPCS, Smt. Monisha Banerjee, Director, ICDS & Social Welfare and Director, OSPCS, Smt. Sumitra Pattanaik, Additional Secretary, Women & Child Development Department; and Smt. Babita Patra, Chairperson, Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCRC).

## Donation Trouble

**T**HE controversy over the alleged misappropriation of donations meant for the Ram Mandir is a reminder that faith and accountability must go hand in hand. The row stems from allegations that some individuals collected money in the temple's name through unauthorised means and diverted it for personal gain. A petition seeking an investigation into the alleged "chanda chori" (donation theft) reached the Supreme Court, though the court declined to entertain it directly and asked the petitioner to pursue the appropriate legal remedy. But the issue has quickly spiralled into a political slugfest, with the BJP and the Opposition trading accusations instead of allowing institutions to ascertain the facts.

Religious institutions occupy a unique place in public life. Donations made to them are acts of trust and carry emotional and spiritual significance. That trust must be protected through transparent financial management, regular audits and prompt disclosure whenever questions arise. Accountability is not an affront to faith; it is the strongest guarantee of its integrity. The larger and more revered the institution, the greater its responsibility to demonstrate that every contribution is being used for its intended purpose.

The controversy also highlights the dangers of reducing sensitive religious issues to political ammunition. Opposition parties have accused the BJP of failing to prevent "donation theft" and demanded strict action against those responsible. The BJP has countered by accusing its rivals of exploiting a sacred issue for political gain. The distinction between questioning financial management and questioning faith itself must never be blurred. The way forward is an impartial and lawful inquiry. If the allegations are baseless, transparency will restore confidence. If irregularities are found, those responsible must face the law, regardless of their position.

## Protecting Ladakh

ADOPTING a zero-tolerance approach, the Ladakh administration has imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 each on four tourists for illegal off-roading in ecologically sensitive areas. This decision marks a significant shift from mere advisories to strict enforcement of laws for environmental and wildlife protection. As tourist arrivals continue to surge, this timely intervention sends a clear message: adventure cannot come at the expense of nature. The picture-perfect landscapes of Pangong Lake, Changthang, Hanle and Nubra valley represent



fragile ecosystems that support rare and endangered animals. Driving vehicles into lakes, streams and protected habitats for social media stunts or thrill-seeking is far more than irresponsible behaviour — it is an assault on the region's biodiversity and ecological balance. Videos of a vehicle chasing a Tibetan gazelle are particularly disturbing; they highlight reckless disregard for wildlife.

The Ladakh authorities deserve credit for using technology, including social media surveillance, to identify offenders and enforce the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The impounding of vehicles and hefty fines demonstrate that unruly tourists will not be treated with kid gloves. Such action is likely to deter future violations and reinforce respect for protected areas. The crackdown is consistent with the administration's vision of sustainable tourism. Recent measures, including the ban on single-use plastics, anti-littering penalties and the establishment of the Ladakh Tourism Development Society, reflect a comprehensive strategy aimed at balancing tourism-driven economic growth with ecological preservation.

The Union Territory has recorded a sharp rise in tourist footfall, but the livelihood boost for local residents is at risk from increasing environmental pressure. Tour operators, vehicle rental agencies, hotels and local communities must actively educate visitors about responsible tourism. Awareness campaigns, better signage and stricter regulation of adventure activities should complement punitive measures. Tourists, too, must realise that preserving Ladakh's pristine environment is a shared responsibility.

# A Hot Cup of Tea

Subash Chandra Misra

Our day does not start well without a hot cup of tea in the morning. When we visit a relative or a friend, a cup of tea or coffee is always on the table. But the tea industry in India goes in to hot waters from time to time due to various factors including labour trouble and financial stress. Tea is not new to India. The tribals of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh were using tea leaves for medicinal purpose long before British colonized India. But British made commercial cultivation by planting tea in hills of India in the second half of 18th century. Today accounting for 22% of global production, India is the world's second largest producer of tea with annual production of about 1.40 million tonnes which is growing at a rate of 4.5% annually. The domestic tea market in India was valued at Rs. 78000 crore in 2025. Tea is produced in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. About 80% of the tea produced in India is consumed domestically and India is among the top five global exporters with export of Rs. 8718 crore in FY 2025-26. India's tea export amounts to 10% of global export and India exports substantial amount of tea to more than 40 countries including Russia, Iran, UAE, USA, Iraq, Germany, and even to China which is the largest tea producer in the world.

Tea is produced from the *Camellia Sinensis* plant and depending on the processing, oxidation and fermentation, it is classified in to six types viz. Green Tea, White Tea, Black Tea, Yellow Tea, Oolong Tea and Dark Tea. Since most Indians take milk with tea, CTC Black tea accounts for about 70% of India's tea consumption. Though some herbal teas like Tulsi, Peppermint, Barley and Chamomile etc are produced from flower, fruits, roots and leaves, these are not produced from the *Camellia Sinensis* plant and the Tea Board has taken objection in calling such products as tea and has appealed to the authorities to issue instructions on appropriately naming such herbal drinks. The market price of tea varies widely depending on the quality. While some of the affordable variety of teas are marketed at a price of less than Rs 200 per kg, the most expensive tea in India is Makaibari Tea, produced at the Makaibari Tea Estate in Darjeeling, West Bengal which fetches up to Rs.50,000 per kg in auctions. Some of its exclusive handpicked batches have even sold for higher amounts internationally, making it a luxury product.

While India's tea export increased by 12% in 25-26 over that of 24-25 in value terms, the middle east war and



closure of Strait of Hormuz has immensely harmed our middle east exports after February. Additionally, India's tea industry is facing financial stress due to rising input costs, stagnant prices, labour shortages and climate-related risks, prompting planters to seek support from authorities. Tea plucking is a labour intensive job and wage accounts for about 60% of the cost of production of average tea brands which makes it very sensitive to labour cost. With rising labour costs and shortage of manpower in some tea gardens for plucking operations, the production is affected. Unpredictable rainfall and higher temperatures due to climate change degrades leaf quality and affects tea production. Some of the tea gardens in West Bengal face labour issues with absenteeism rising to 25-30%. With rising cost of electricity and fertilizer, the cheaper varieties of tea face challenge from competitor countries. Some of the mid price

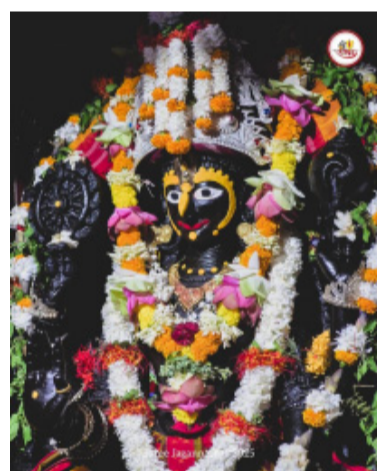
tea varieties of Nepal and Kenya are fraudulently marketed as Darjeeling tea which adversely affects the brand value of Darjeeling tea. The financial stress faced by tea gardens delays uprooting and the replanting operations of aged bushes which reduces the productivity of the gardens. In 2024 while the global tea production increased by 347.21 mn kgs, the production in India declined by 90.13 mn kgs (Tea Board Annual Report). Out of the 1567 big tea estates in the country today 17 are closed/dysfunctional due to financial stress.

The Tea Board of India formed in 1903 acts as the regulator to oversee tea gardens in India, production, processing and export of tea. The Board also promotes Indian tea globally and runs various schemes to support tea estates and small tea growers. At present it runs various schemes for tea garden workers like Pradhan Mantri Cha Shramik Protsahan Yojna towards welfare and development (ii) Cha Shramik Shiksha Yojana to improve the educational facilities for children of the workers (iii) Cha Shramik Swasthya Suraksha Yojana to provide additional infrastructure and services in tea garden areas for improving access to better health facilities, especially

tea garden women workers and their dependent children and (iv) Cha Shramik Aashray Yojana to provide adequate housing and resting sheds for the garden workers. The Government of India, in 2025, extended the weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme to cover losses caused by erratic rainfall, unseasonal weather, and rising temperatures by tea plantations in West Bengal, Assam and Kerala. The Tea Board is also helping small tea growers to form self help groups and farmer producer organisations to move up the value chain and contribute to the industry. The Tea Board supports research for soil testing and developing drought resistant, insect resistant high yielding varieties to increase productivity for which it maintains a tea research centre at Darjeeling and a quality control Laboratory at Siliguri. Tea industry has also adopted automation in blending and packaging in Assam and West Bengal and AI based moisture detection systems. These upgrades reduce manual variability and improve flavor consistency. The Tea Board has also started digital auction in Kolkata and Guwahati to expand reach so as to stand better amidst competition.

The author is a Retired Chief General Manager of Reserve Bank of India.

## Alarnath Temple: The Lord's temporary abode



Er. Subhendu Mohan Subudhiray

When Lord Jagannath and his siblings remain out of public view during 'Anavasara,' devotees can visit the Alarnath temple to seek the Lord's blessings. As per the belief, Lord Jagannath manifests in the form of Lord Alarnath for 15 days during 'Anasara' of the deities after Snana Purnima and His darshan brings some fortune and well being.

The holy trinity - Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra, along with Lord Sudarshan had a lavish bath on Snana Purnima to beat the summer heat. Subsequently, as per the traditions, they fall sick with a fever, for the next 15 days. The siblings are then transferred to Anasara Ghara and become unavailable for a darshan. During this time, they are treated with herbs, flower and root extracts etc., just like human beings to cure the ailment.

The servitors follow secret rituals and perform the duties with proper care to rejuvenate the Lords. After Snana Purnima in Jagannath temple, the devotees start thronging to Alarnath temple located in Brahmagiri of Puri district to have a glimpse of Lord Alarnath, who is believed to be the avatar of Lord Jagannath. It is widely believed that the Holy Trinity manifests itself in the 13th century Alarnath temple and darshan of this shrine during Anasara of

*Alarnath Temple: The Lord's temporary abode. It is believed that devotees have the blessings of Lord Jagannath after having darshan of Alarnath. They also get 'Mahaprasad' like the one in Jagannath temple in Puri. This apart, Alarnath's favourite 'Pudding' (Khiri Prasad) is also available at the Ananda Bazaar here.*

deities bring same fortune and wellbeing.

The temple was established by the royal Alwar dynasty of Rajasthan and was named Alwarnath, which later became Alarnath with due course of time. It houses Lord Alarnath, the standing idol of four-armed Lord Vishnu, made of black chlorite.

Alarnath Temple: The Lord's temporary abode. It is believed that devotees have the blessings of Lord Jagannath after having darshan of Alarnath. They also get 'Mahaprasad' like the one in Jagannath temple in Puri. This apart, Alarnath's favourite 'Pudding' (Khiri Prasad) is also available at the Ananda Bazaar here.

There is a legend behind naming the temple after Lord Alarnath. Once during the Anasara period, a devotee

Alabandacharya could not see Lord Jagannath and while returning with deep mental agony he decided to commit suicide by jumping into the sea. The Lord could know the internal feeling of his devotee. He fulfilled the desire of his devotee by appearing before him in the form of Lord Narayan with four hands at Brahmagiri, located south of Puri at a distance of 'Sata Kosha'. The image of Lord Narayan became famous at Alarnath after the name of the devotee Albandacharya. Likewise, the divine personality of Sri Chaitanya was overwhelmed with joy and became emotional after seeing Lord Jagannath in the image of Lord Alarnath."

"Visiting the temple makes you realise the omnipresence of the Lord. You feel that Lord Jagannath is present in this temple. It is believed that devotees going to Alarnath temple during the Anavasara period get the same feeling of satisfaction as seeing the Trinity at Jagannath temple. It is believed that Lord Jagannath, impressed with Saint Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's devotion, appeared in his dream and advised him to visit Alarnath temple in Brahmagiri. Likewise, there is another mythological story that the creator of the universe, Lord Brahma had come down to earth to consecrate the Sri Jagannath temple at Puri. The place where Lord Brahma landed first on earth became known as Brahmagiri in the subsequent period.

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## Alarnath temple : Second abode of Lord Jagannath

Sukanta Chhatoi

Alarnath Temple or Allarnath as it is also known, is an ancient shrine dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It is located in Brahmagiri which is 24km away from Puri. In Satya Yuga, Lord Brahma worshipped Lord Vishnu here on top of a hill. One day Lord Vishnu appeared and said, "I am very pleased with your worship. Make a four-armed Deity of Me holding shankha, chakra, gada, and padma. The Deity should be made from a single piece of black stone. Also install a deity of Garuda". Lord Vishnu also said, "This place will be called Brahmagiri because you have worshipped me here". Devotees flock to the temple during the dark fortnight in the month of Ashaad, after the Snana Yatra when Lord Jagannath is taken "ill" can't be seen in Puri. During this period, popularly known as Anasara or 'Anavasara' literally meaning 'no opportunity', instead of having darshan in Jagannath Temple, people believe that Lord Jagannath during this time manifests as Alarnath Dev, at the Alarnath temple in Brahmagiri.

After the ritualistic bath, the deities are taken one after another to a sick room called 'Anasara Ghara' where they spend the next 15-days in quarantine for recovery from this fever. During this isolation period, as the deities are kept out of public view, devotees make a bee line at Alarnath temple at Brahmagiri to have a darshan of Lord Alarnath, who is believed to be the incarnation of Lord Jagannath. It is said that Lord Jagannath manifests as Lord Alarnath to bless devotees during the Anasara and the darshan of Lord Alarnath brings the same blessings and fortune of the darshan of Lord Jagannath.

As per a legend, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the 15th century saint, is considered as Lord Krishna's avatar by his followers. During his stay in Puri, he used to have darshan of Lord Jagannath daily. However, during the 'Anasara' period, he wasn't allowed to have the darshan of Lord Jagannath. Saddened over it, he prayed to Lord Jagannath saying he would end his life by plunging into the ocean if he didn't have a darshan of Him. Pleased with his prayers, Lord Jagannath came in his dream and directed him to go to Alarnath temple at Brahmagiri.

As directed, he visited the temple and there he could see Lord Jagannath in the idol of Lord Alarnath. An elated Chaitanya Mahaprabhu prostrated himself before the deity. The stone got melted after getting his blissful touch. His body impressions on the stone can still be found today. Legend also has it that Lord Brahma worshipped Lord Vishnu here on the top of the hill. The 13th century Alarnath temple was built by a ruler of the royal Alwar dynasty of Rajasthan. Then the temple was known as Alwarnath. With the passage of time, the temple's name changed and it gradually became known as Alarnath temple.

Here in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, the standing idol of four armed Lord Vishnu holding 'sankha', 'chakra', 'gada' and 'padma' is worshipped. The idol is made of black chlorite. Lord's carrier Garuda can be found kneeling at the feet of the deity with hands folded in a prayer position. During the Holy Trinity's Anasara, devotees visiting Alarnath temple also get 'Mahaprasad' at the 'Ananda Bazaar' like they get at Srimandir in Puri. The same amount of Prasad is offered to Lord Alarnath as it is offered to Lord Jagannath in Srimandir during normal days.

Besides, Lord Alarnath's favourite pudding 'kheer' is also available here. While 'kheer' is available for round the year at the temple's 'Ananda Bazaar', the demand for the kheer goes up significantly during 'Anasara' period. There is also a legend to give credence to the fact that Lord Alarnath's most favourite food is 'kheer'. One day, the priest forgot to offer the 'kheer' to the deity and left the temple. It was when he realized this that he returned to the temple to offer the pudding. But he stood rooted to the spot after what he saw in the temple. He saw there were 'kheer' drops on the face of the idol, suggesting that he had already tasted His favourite pudding.

At the temple, 'Baal Bhoga' is offered to the deity in the morning. At noon, different types of rice, daal, vegetable curries and kheer is offered. Similarly, at night, khechudi, different types of pithas and plantain fry are offered. This is why Alarnath temple is called the second abode of Lord Jagannath.

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## High-Level PM Meet Begins With Union Secretaries, Overall Reforms On Agenda

New Delhi, 30/6: A high-level meeting called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Secretaries of all Central government ministries and departments began here at Seva Teerth on Tuesday, with a focus on a comprehensive discussion on the reform agenda, as the government pushes for next-generation administrative and economic reforms. The focus areas are expected to include ease of doing business, digital governance, deregulation, and last-mile delivery. Apart from the Cabinet Secretary, the meeting is attended by the two Principal Secretaries to the PM — P.K. Mishra and Shaktikanta Das, along with Secretaries of all key departments. This is one of the first full-Secretary-level interactions with the PM in the current fiscal (FY27), seen as a signal to align the bureaucracy with key policy priorities for the second half of 2026. The meeting focuses on advancing the



government's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' by simplifying regulations, promoting 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', and enhancing administrative efficiency across ministries and departments. The meeting marks the Prime Minister's second comprehensive interaction with the country's top civil servants. Discussions

are expected to centre on the government's flagship reform agenda, particularly measures to further improve the Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living. Senior officials are also likely to present updates on structural reforms, assess implementation progress and identify areas requiring greater attention to ensure timely

execution of key policy initiatives. The review assumes added significance as the Centre has recently launched the ambitious "52 Reforms in 52 Weeks" initiative across several ministries, including Railways, with clearly defined implementation timelines. Prime Minister Modi has consistently emphasised the importance of achieving measurable outcomes within stipulated deadlines, making periodic reviews a crucial component of the government's governance. The meeting is expected to provide an opportunity for ministries to assess progress, address implementation challenges, and strengthen coordination to accelerate reforms that improve public service delivery, reduce regulatory burdens, and enhance the ease of doing business for industries, as well as the ease of living for citizens.

## NITI Aayog Calls For Improving Ease Of Doing Biz, Streamlining Processes To Boost India's Tourism Sector

New Delhi, 30/6: Despite strong fundamentals, India's tourism outcomes remain below potential, a NITI Aayog report said on Tuesday, highlighting the need to improve ease of doing business to accelerate investments, while also emphasising the importance of visa facilitation in converting tourism interest into actual arrivals. India's tourism sector is significant in terms of economic contribution and employment. In FY 2023-24, the sector contributed Rs 15.73 lakh crore (\$170 billion) to India's GDP, accounting for 5.22 per cent of the total economy, and supported an estimated 84.6 million jobs — reflecting a 20 per cent increase over five years. Domestic tourism has been a key driver, with 2.9 billion domestic tourist visits recorded in 2024, surpassing the pre-pandemic peak of 2.3 billion in 2019, said the report, titled 'Unlocking Growth

in Tourism and Hospitality Sector'. India's tourism assets are well recognised globally. The country has 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 106 national parks, and 18 biosphere reserves, along with established pilgrimage and wellness tourism segments. International tourism has also recovered in recent years. In 2024, India recorded approximately 20.6 million total international tourist arrivals (including NRIs), with international tourism receipts of approximately \$35 billion, reflecting 9 per cent growth from 2023. However, India accounts for less than 1.5 per cent of global international tourist arrivals, significantly lower than leading economies. While total international arrivals appear robust, the number of foreign tourist arrivals (9.95 million in 2024), provides a more accurate reflection of core tourism demand and remains below pre-pandemic levels, as well

as substantially lower than peer destinations such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, the report noted. Tourism-related foreign exchange earnings remain modest relative to India's scale and diversity. Also, outbound tourism from India has grown rapidly, indicating leakage of domestic demand. Outbound spending by Indian travellers has increased significantly, exceeding pre-pandemic levels by approximately 15 per cent. "This divergence suggests that while demand for travel is strong, a substantial share is being met through international travel rather than within the domestic tourism ecosystem," the report stressed, adding that these gaps point to underlying structural constraints that limit India's ability to convert its tourism assets and demand into realised outcomes. Rajiv Gauba, Member, NITI Aayog, said that India's tourism sector is uniquely positioned to drive economic growth, employment, and regional development.

## Govt Reappoints Ravi Agrawal As CBDT Chairman For Six Months

New Delhi, 30/6: The government on Tuesday approved the reappointment of Ravi Agrawal as Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on a contract basis for a period of six months. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved Agrawal's fresh term, which will be effective from July 1 to December 31, 2026, or until further orders, whichever is earlier. The ACC approved the proposal for Agrawal's continuation as the head of the apex direct tax administration body, ensuring continuity in the functioning of the CBDT. The order stated that the reappointment has been made on the usual terms and conditions applicable to re-employed central government officers and in relaxation of the recruitment rules. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the re-appointment of Ravi Agrawal as Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), on contract basis, for a period of six months with effect from July 1 till December 31, or until further orders, whichever is earlier, on the usual terms and conditions applicable to re-employed Central Government officers, in relaxation of the Recruitment Rules," the official order stated. Agrawal, a 1988-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer of the Income Tax cadre, was appointed CBDT Chairman in June 2024, succeeding Nitin Gupta. Before taking over as Chairman, he had served as Member (Administration) in the CBDT from July 2023. He was subsequently reappointed for a one-year term from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

The CBDT, the apex policymaking body of the Income Tax Department under the Department of Revenue, is headed by a chairman and can have up to six members in the rank of Special Secretary to the Government of India. It is responsible for administering direct tax laws, formulating tax policies, strengthening compliance and improving taxpayer services. The reappointment comes at a time when direct tax collections have continued to register healthy growth. According to the Income Tax Department, net direct tax collections rose 14.64 per cent year-on-year to Rs 5.21 lakh crore during the April 1-June 17 period of the current financial year.

## Strengthening Ties With India 'Extremely Important', Affirms Japan Ahead Of Takaichi's New Delhi Visit

Tokyo/New Delhi, 30/6: Sanae Takaichi, Prime Minister of Japan, will visit India from July 1 to 3 and hold a Japan-India summit meeting with her Indian counterpart, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Japanese Foreign Ministry announced on Tuesday. "Through this visit, we plan to discuss further strengthening of complementary cooperation toward economic growth through investment and innovation, as well as in areas such as energy and other economic security, under the Japan-India Joint Vision for the next 10 years announced during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan last August, in order to strengthen relations with India, which is extremely important for realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific," read a statement issued by the ministry ahead of Takaichi's visit. The Japanese PM is scheduled to arrive in New Delhi on Wednesday evening and will be accorded a Ceremonial Reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday morning. She is then



scheduled to hold a meeting with PM Modi which will be followed by the signing and exchange of several agreements between both countries. During her visit, Takaichi will also be attending a business forum. This will be her first official visit to India after assuming office. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), during the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit, both sides are expected to review and

strengthen the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation as well as discuss regional and global issues of mutual interest. "This visit follows Prime Minister Modi's visit to Tokyo in August 2025 for the 15th India-Japan Annual Summit and reflects the shared commitment of the two countries to further enhance India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership," the MEA stated last week. Earlier this month, PM

Modi met Takaichi on the sidelines of the Group of Seven (G7) Summit in France and stated that India and Japan will continue to deepen ties across diverse sectors. "Had a great interaction with Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi of Japan. India and Japan will continue to deepen ties in diverse sectors, with a priority on trade and investment," PM Modi posted on X after the meeting. In May, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi called on PM Modi in New Delhi and reaffirmed the vital role being played by the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership in advancing peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific. "Delighted to receive Mr Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. Reaffirmed the vital role of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership in advancing peace, stability and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific and beyond," PM Modi wrote on X after the meeting. Motegi stated that, based on the Japan-India Joint Vision for the Next 10 Years

announced during PM Modi's visit to Japan last year, various initiatives are being pursued in the areas of security, economy, investment, innovation, and people-to-people exchanges. Furthermore, both sides agreed to cooperate in realising a strong and prosperous Indo-Pacific under an evolved Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). Both sides had confirmed that they will work together to achieve concrete results in areas such as economic growth through investment, innovation, and knowledge circulation, as well as cooperation in the field of economic security. India and Japan share a Special Strategic and Global Partnership and friendship between the two nations has a long history rooted in spiritual affinity and strong cultural and civilisational ties. There is synergy between India's Act-East Policy, Indo-Pacific vision based on the principle of SAGAR, and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) on one hand, and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision on the other.

## India Sees New Enquiries For BrahMos From Gulf, Latin America And Asia: Report

New Delhi, 30/6: Interest in the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile — a joint venture between India's DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya — has expanded beyond Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia to reported enquiries from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Thailand, Brazil and Chile. India is stepping up arms exports across Asia and talks with the United Arab Emirates are under way for sales of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile and, if concluded, would mark the missile's first entry into the Gulf, according to multiple reports. The BrahMos travels at around Mach 2.8, carries a 200 300-kilogram warhead and has had its range progressively extended to roughly 450 kilometres in its most advanced variants. The UAE is also in early talks with India to also acquire the Akasheera Air defence command-and-control system, developed by Bharat Electronics Limited alongside the Indian Army. India is developing



institutional infrastructure to be a long-term arms supplier with lifecycle support systems and end-use monitoring. Further, it is procuring diplomatic strength to manage consequences when its weapons are used in the field by importing nations. Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh told the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore last month that India has signed a BrahMos deal with

Vietnam and that an agreement with Indonesia is in its final stages. The Ministry of Defence said Indonesia has backed a proposal to set up a Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee covering technology transfer, joint research and development and supply chain integration. Analysts noted a pattern among recent buyers, that all of them have active maritime disputes

with China, or other regional security concerns. They felt that India is only responding to market demand that happens to come from countries with China-related security concerns, adding that the sales don't indicate any formal anti-China move. Defence ministry data showed that defence exports rose to a record Rs 38,424 crore in FY26, up around 62 per cent from the previous year. Another recent report said that drones will remain among the fastest growing segments within India's defence ecosystem, with the tactical drone procurement opportunity rising from Rs 30 35 billion in the previous procurement cycle to nearly Rs 120 140 billion. India's defence sector is entering a structural, multi-year growth cycle driven by indigenisation, increasing defence capital expenditure, rising exports and accelerated adoption of advanced technologies, it said.

## SC Orders Status Quo On Ethanol Allocation For Supply Year 2025-26

New Delhi, 30/6: The Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered maintenance of status quo on ethanol allocation for the Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26, temporarily staying the effect of a Karnataka High Court direction requiring oil marketing companies (OMCs) to reconsider the allocation made to a dedicated ethanol manufacturer. A bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Sheel Nagu passed the interim order while hearing a special leave petition (SLP) filed by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) challenging the June 16 judgment of the Karnataka High Court. The apex court issued notice to the respondents and directed that the existing allocation process remain undisturbed till the next date of hearing. "Issue notice. List on reopening. Till the next date of hearing, there shall be status quo," the Justice Sundresh-led Bench ordered. Appearing for BPCL, Attorney General (AG) R. Venkataramani contended that the Karnataka High Court's direction to reconsider the representation of VINP Distilleries and Sugars Pvt. Ltd. seeking enhancement of its ethanol allocation could destabilise the Centre's ethanol blending policy and disrupt the ongoing procurement process. The AG submitted that ethanol supply contracts for ESY 2025-



26 had already been finalised in October 2025 and supplies under the contracts were underway. The Centre's highest law officer argued that no company could claim a legal entitlement to a higher ethanol quota and that judicial directions effectively altering the allocation methodology would amount to interference with government policy. The Union government also informed the apex court that multiple petitions raising similar issues were pending before different High Courts and sought liberty to file transfer petitions for an authoritative decision by the Supreme Court. During the hearing, the Centre submitted that the E20 fuel programme — which involves blending 20 per cent ethanol with petrol — is still at an evolving stage,

and the policy is intended to strengthen India's energy security, augment farmers' income, and reduce carbon emissions. The SLP before the apex court arose from a June 16 Karnataka High Court judgment directing BPCL, the Indian Oil Corporation, and the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation to consider and decide a representation filed by VINP Distilleries seeking enhancement of its ethanol allocation for ESY 2025-26 under the long-term offtake agreement executed with the OMCs. The Karnataka High Court had held that the representation deserved consideration in light of Clause 6.8 of the Long-Term Offtake Agreement, under which dedicated ethanol plants claimed preferential allocation on a "best endeavour basis".

## Nine Years Of GST Mark Success Of India's Biggest Tax Reform

New Delhi, 30/6: The launch of the Goods & Services Tax (GST) on July 1, 2017, marked a historic achievement in India's economic reforms journey, with the principle of "One Nation, One Tax" helping to create a common national market, according to an official factsheet issued on Tuesday. As GST completes nine years, it has also undergone next-generation reforms in 2025, which further simplified the structure through lower rates, exemptions and easier processes. These measures aim to benefit

households, MSMEs, farmers, artisans, exporters, and various trade sectors, the statement said. The number of GST taxpayers increased from 66.5 lakh in 2017 to 1.65 crore as of May 2026. This points to greater formalisation of the economy and the success of the new tax regime. Gross GST collection stood at around Rs 7.4 lakh crore in 2017-18 and has increased steadily over the years. Over the last five years, collections rose from Rs 13.76 lakh crore in 2021-22 to Rs 22.27 lakh crore in 2025-26.

# India Underlines Key Principles At Informal HODs Meeting On Plastic Pollution

Nairobi,30/6: India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Adarsh Swaika, on Tuesday led the country's delegation at the Informal Heads of Delegations (HODs) meeting in Nairobi ahead of the next session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop the instrument on plastic pollution. "He underlined several key principles on behalf of Indian delegation while conveying India's readiness to engage constructively towards a balanced and effective outcome," the High Commissioner of India in Nairobi wrote on X. The key principles include "Decisions must be taken by consensus to ensure collective ownership," and Scope must focus strictly on plastic pollution in line with United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution 5/14, avoiding overlap with other international frameworks, particularly with WTO/WHO. Swaika, also India's High Commissioner to Kenya, underlined that the process must be member-driven and suggested no capping or regulating the



production of primary polymer to safeguard right to development. He emphasised that implementation must be country-driven, taking into account national circumstances and guided by Rio principles, including common but differentiated

responsibilities. The Indian High Commission also highlighted that provision of means of implementation to developing countries is critical, including a dedicated multilateral fund and a fair, transparent, inclusive process that is reflective of national circumstances and

capabilities. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also shared his views on fairness and equity in climate justice during his special address at the National Assembly of Seychelles as part of his official visit to the archipelagic island. According to PM Modi, the Global South

and the island nations are the most impacted by climate change, and the effects are already visible on coastlines, marine ecosystems, weather patterns, and in communities. "We both firmly believe that those who have contributed the least to climate change should not bear the greatest burden of its consequences. Climate action must be guided by fairness, responsibility, and equity. This is the essence of climate justice," he stressed. "India has sought to lead by example. Over the last decade, we have undertaken one of the world's largest expansions of renewable energy. We have championed sustainable lifestyles through Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment). Through our initiatives, like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA), and 'Ek Ped Maa Kee Naam' (a tree in mother's remembrance), we have worked with partner countries to boost the green transition," he noted.

# Quad Ministers To Meet In Philippines: US Ambassador

Washington: The foreign ministers of the Quad countries are expected to meet in the Philippines in about two weeks, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor announced, saying the grouping remained central to advancing a free, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Speaking at the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) Leadership Summit, Gor said the proposed meeting would bring together the foreign ministers of the United States, India, Japan and Australia on the sidelines of engagements in the Philippines. "I wanna make an announcement here today," Gor said. "We were very pleased to have the Quad meeting in Delhi, and that's something we aim to build up." "One of the things that we're actually looking to do is in about two weeks, all four of our foreign ministers will be in the Philippines and we'll look forward to having a Quad meeting on the sidelines of the Philippines." Gor said the meeting would be followed by another ministerial gathering in Australia before leaders of the four countries meet at a future summit. "We do aim to have a Quad meeting at some point, a ministerial Quad meeting in Australia." "And followed ultimately by a leaders meeting which we're trying to nail down. That would include President Trump coming to India." The ambassador said maritime security remained one of the principal priorities for the Quad. "The Quad is extremely important," he said. He noted that one of the initiatives announced during the recent Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi involved strengthening maritime capabilities across the Indo-Pacific. "One of the deliverables that was announced in Delhi was that the four countries will focus on building boats in the region. That includes Fiji specifically." "We wanna make sure that we are present in the Pacific. We're growing, we're enhancing our security, and we're working with trusted partners." "And India is on that list, very high that list." Gor also dismissed suggestions that the India-US defence partnership had weakened, saying practical cooperation continued to expand.

# South Korea, Ukraine Agree To Seek Resolution Of North Korean PoW Issue Under Int'l Law

Seoul,30/6: South Korea and Ukraine agreed Tuesday to work toward resolving the issue of North Korean Prisoners of War (PoWs) captured in Ukraine in accordance with international law and humanitarian principles, Seoul's foreign ministry said. The consensus was made during a meeting between Foreign Minister Cho Hyun and his Ukrainian counterpart, Andrii Sybiha, in Seoul earlier in the day, according to the ministry. Two North Korean soldiers were captured by Ukrainian forces in early 2025 after being deployed to Russia's Kursk region in support of Moscow, and they have reportedly expressed their desire to come to South Korea, Yonhap news agency reported. "The two ministers agreed to seek a resolution to the issue of North Korean prisoners of war in Ukraine in a manner consistent with international law and humanitarian principles, while respecting the free will of the individuals concerned," the



ministry said in a release. "The two sides also exchanged in-depth views on the war in Ukraine and major regional developments, including those on the Korean Peninsula," it added. Foreign ministry spokesperson Park Il said the two sides were engaged in "constructive discussions" on the war prisoners issue and stressed that Seoul

would continue diplomatic efforts to make progress toward its resolution. The Seoul government has maintained that North Korean soldiers are constitutionally regarded as South Korean nationals and that it would accept any POWs wishing to come to South Korea. While the Ukrainian government has maintained that it will not forcibly repatriate North

# Trump Signs 'Right To Repair' Order

Washington,30/6: US President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum aimed at making vehicle repairs cheaper and easier, saying Americans should have the freedom to repair their own cars without facing unnecessary government restrictions or inflated costs. The memorandum directs the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support what the administration called Americans' "freedom to fix" their own vehicles while also expanding competition in the aftermarket parts industry. Trump said the initiative was intended to reduce the cost of owning and maintaining a vehicle. "I think it's very important, going to lower the price of your car. It's going to lower the price of fixing your car. It has to do with affordability," the President said before signing the memorandum. He said the issue came to his attention after learning that people repairing their own vehicles had faced government action. "It came to my attention because I noticed they were arresting people for fixing their car. They were arresting people for fixing — that's not even believable," Trump said. "So it's right to fix and I think it's really common sense." He added that many vehicle owners possessed mechanical skills equal to or better than professional mechanics. "If somebody wants to fix — some of these people have better mechanics than the mechanics in the shop. They're telling the mechanic in the shop how to fix their car or their truck," Trump said. EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said the memorandum builds on an earlier "right to repair" policy for agricultural equipment signed in February and extends similar protections to passenger vehicles. "This is a presidential memo supporting the freedom to fix," Zeldin said. "Americans have the freedom to fix their vehicle. President Trump insists upon it. We are not going to be going after people who are fixing their own vehicle, like past administrations have." Zeldin also said the administration would seek to curb imports of "cheap knockoff aftermarket parts" that harm American businesses while ending California's exclusive role in certifying aftermarket vehicle parts. "The only third-party certification for these aftermarket parts is CARB in California, a process that's backlogged and faulty," he said. "So we're going to break that monopoly and no longer will CARB be the only third-party certifier for these aftermarket parts." According to Zeldin, Trump personally pushed the proposal after raising the idea during a weekend phone call and wanted to move quickly to announce it publicly.

Korean POWs against their will, a final decision on the matter has yet to be made, as Kyiv is also weighing broader considerations regarding the treatment of POWs from other countries, sources said. In a post on social platform X, Sybiha said he and Cho "discussed in detail the issue of North Korean POWs, and we know how to proceed in accordance with international humanitarian law." Sybiha also stressed the "global consequences" of Russia's war against Ukraine, citing Moscow's expanding military cooperation with North Korea. During his visit to South Korea, Sybiha travelled to the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), the heavily fortified border separating the two Koreas, where he underscored the need for closer cooperation between South Korea and Ukraine in response to threats posed by North Korea and Russia. "Behind this line lies a totalitarian regime that actively helps Russia destroy peaceful Ukrainian cities. Due to the dangerous actions of Pyongyang and Moscow, this historic line is now physically linked to our own front lines in Ukraine," he said. "Through its involvement of the DPRK in its war against Ukraine and by boosting the regime in Pyongyang, Moscow is exporting instability to the Korean Peninsula," he said, saying Ukraine is ready to offer South Korea a "mutually beneficial security partnership." The DPRK is the acronym of the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It marked the first visit by a Ukrainian foreign minister to South Korea since 2015, though the two ministers met in France in March on the sidelines of a Group of Seven foreign ministers' meeting. During Tuesday's talks, Cho and Sybiha also discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction efforts, as well as economic and business ties, the ministry said.

# World Leaders Condemn Pakistan Airstrikes In Afghanistan, Call For Restraint

Kabul,30/6: Several world leaders and the global community condemned the Pakistani military airstrikes carried out in Afghanistan's provinces of Paktia, Paktika, and Kunar, killing and injuring several civilians, including women and children. The remarks came after Taliban Deputy Spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat on Monday confirmed that airstrikes carried out on the night of June 28 in the Afghan provinces by Pakistani military resulted in the death of 36 civilians and injuries to 163 others as well as the complete destruction of three residential houses. Expressing grave concern over the latest violence between Afghanistan and Pakistan that resulted in civilian casualties, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the protection of civilians. "The Secretary-General reiterates his call on the parties to resolve their differences through diplomacy. We continue to call on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and continue to stress that civilians and civilian infrastructure must be



protected at all times," said Stephane Dujarric, the spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, during a press briefing. Meanwhile, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) confirmed that dozens of civilians, including women and children, were killed and injured during the Pakistani airstrikes in three Afghan provinces. "UNAMA reiterates its call for respect for the international humanitarian law principles of precaution, distinction and

proportionality to protect civilians from harm. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery for the injured," the UN mission said in a statement. Following the attack, the European Union (EU) called for immediate de-escalation and restraint, stressing the need to protect civilians and ensure adherence to international humanitarian law. Taking to his social media platform X, Anouar El Anouni, the European Union's spokesman for

foreign affairs, said, "The EU calls for full protection of civilians after airstrikes in Kunar, Paktia and Paktika resulted in civilian casualties. International humanitarian law must be respected at all times. We call for immediate de-escalation and restraint." Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, voiced concerns over the civilian casualties, including women and children, during

Pakistani airstrikes in Afghan provinces, while calling for restraint and civilian protection. "Disturbed by civcas, incl. women & children, in Pakistan's airstrikes in Paktia, Paktika & Kunar provinces, Afghanistan. Condolences to those affected. Pakistan's security concerns must be addressed in accordance with int. law. I urge restraint, civilian protection & accountability," he posted on X. Condemning the attacks, Richard Lindsay, the United Kingdom's special envoy to Afghanistan, took to X and posted: "Deeply concerned by the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the continued, tragic loss of life. We condemn all forms of terrorism. We urge adherence to international humanitarian law and protection of civilians and reiterate calls to de-escalate." Earlier on Monday, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of Pakistan in Kabul and conveyed its strong and unequivocal protest regarding the violation of Afghanistan's airspace and the aerial bombardment of civilian homes in Kunar, Paktia, and Paktika provinces.

# India Intensifies Earthquake Relief Efforts In Venezuela Under Operation Amistad

Caracas,30/6: India has intensified its humanitarian outreach in earthquake-hit Venezuela under Operation Amistad, expanding relief efforts with a focus on providing medical assistance and emergency support to those affected by the disaster. The Embassy of India in Caracas, Venezuela, on Tuesday shared an update on X, saying: "Operation Amistad: India has intensified its efforts for disaster relief in Venezuela with a healing touch to those affected by the earthquake." Earlier, the Indian Army contingent deployed in Venezuela under Operation Amistad established a field hospital to provide urgent medical assistance to people impacted by the devastating earthquake. In a post on X, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "Operation Amistad underway in Venezuela. Army Field Hospital giving a caring hand to those impacted by the earthquake." On June 28, India dispatched urgent humanitarian assistance to earthquake-hit Venezuela as part of its disaster relief response following a series of powerful earthquakes that caused widespread devastation in the South American nation. Announcing the mission, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar then posted on X, "Indian assistance reaches Venezuela. Confident that the Field Hospital Unit, relief supplies, medicines & medical equipment, will bolster ongoing post-earthquake relief efforts in the country. #OperationAmistad" The Indian Embassy in Cote d'Ivoire also highlighted the scale of the relief operation in a post on X, stating that two Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft transited through Abidjan en route to Venezuela carrying humanitarian supplies and medical support. The embassy said, "Operation Amistad - Responding to the devastating earthquake that struck northern Venezuela, the two Indian Airforce C17s transited through Abidjan en route to Venezuela carrying 35 T of relief equipment, an Indian Army Field Hospital contingent and two BHISHM cubes." It further added, "The contingent comprises 41 personnel, including nine medical officers, and is equipped to provide emergency medical care, trauma management, life-saving surgical support and other essential healthcare services to those affected by the earthquake."

## India's Banks In Strong Position To Drive Growth: RBI Governor

New Delhi,30: RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Tuesday that India's financial system remains a key source of strength and support for the real economy and the country's growth momentum, as banks and NBFCs remain sound, supported by strong capital and liquidity positions, healthy profitability, low levels of non-performing assets, and robust credit growth. In his foreword to the RBI's Financial Stability Report, Malhotra said: "The Indian economy and the financial system have demonstrated remarkable resilience despite facing external shocks of significant magnitude. Strong growth, low inflation, healthy balance sheets of financial and nonfinancial firms, and ample



buffers have helped preserve macro-financial stability." The Financial Stability report states that India's sound macroeconomic fundamentals place it in a stronger position than many of its peers and provide greater resilience to external shocks than in past crisis episodes. The balance of risks has

turned favourable, supported by the interim peace deal and recent policy measures by the government and the Reserve Bank aimed at strengthening capital inflows. The report highlights that the domestic financial system remains resilient, underpinned by strong bank and non-bank

balance sheets. Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) remain safe and sound, supported by strong capital and liquidity buffers, continued improvement in asset quality, and stable profitability. Macro stress test results indicate that the banking system remains well-positioned to absorb potential shocks, with aggregate capital ratios projected to remain comfortably above regulatory thresholds even under hypothetical adverse scenarios. Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) remain financially sound, supported by strong capitalisation, healthy profitability, and improving asset quality. The insurance sector continues to display

balance sheet resilience with the solvency ratio of life insurers remaining above the minimum threshold. "Nevertheless, we remain alert to evolving external and domestic risks and are committed to further strengthening the guardrails that protect our economy and financial system from potential shocks," Malhotra said. Persistent supply chain uncertainties could tighten financial conditions and revive inflationary pressures. Meanwhile, elevated public debt, bond market fragilities, stretched asset valuations, and leveraged NBFIs remain key vulnerabilities that could amplify future shocks, the report added.

## Kotak Mahindra Bank MD and CEO Ashok Vaswani to step down at year end; board begins succession process

Mumbai,28/6: Kotak Mahindra Bank Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Ashok Vaswani has decided not to seek re-appointment after his current term ends on December 31, prompting the bank's board to initiate the process of appointing a new chief executive, according to a stock exchange filing on Saturday. In its regulatory filing to the BSE and the National Stock Exchange (NSE), Kotak Mahindra Bank said Vaswani informed the board that, "for personal reasons, he does not wish to seek re-appointment upon completion of his current term on December 31, 2026." The bank said its board has accepted the decision and has already begun the succession process. The bank also said the appointment of a new Managing Director and CEO will be completed in line with regulatory requirements before the end of Vaswani's current tenure. "The Board has, at its meeting held today, respected his decision and has initiated the process for the appointment of a new Managing Director & CEO. The process will be completed within applicable regulatory timelines," the bank said in the exchange filing.

## Gold, Silver Extend Losses As Fed Rate Concerns Weigh On Sentiment

New Delhi,30/6: Gold and silver prices continued to face selling pressure on Tuesday as investors and traders remained cautious over developments in West Asia and the US interest rate outlook. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures (August) declined as much as 1.37 per cent or Rs 1,952, to hit an intraday low of Rs 1,40,450 per 10 grams at around 11:50 am. At the last count, the yellow metal was trading at Rs 1,41,124, down over Rs 1,278, or around 1 per cent. It touched an intraday high of Rs 1,41,501, down Rs 900 or 0.63 per cent. Meanwhile, silver futures (September) also traded lower, falling over 1 per cent or Rs 2,387 to an intraday low of Rs 2,20,247 per kg. The white metal was trading at Rs 2,21,715 per kg, down over Rs 900, or 0.41 per cent, after touching an intraday high of Rs 2,22,293, a decline of Rs 341, or 0.15 per cent. According to market experts, gold



prices remained under pressure as investors continued to assess developments in West Asia and the US Federal Reserve's interest rate trajectory. They said markets are pricing in three rate hikes by the US central bank this year, with the first likely in September, while investors are also awaiting the US monthly employment report for fresh policy cues. For silver, analysts said the near-term bias remains cautious after the

metal failed to hold above the Rs 2,22,500 level. In the international market, COMEX gold was trading below the \$4,000-an-ounce mark, while COMEX silver gained more than 1 per cent to trade at \$59.11. International benchmark Brent crude fell more than 1 per cent to \$73.08 per barrel. Similarly, US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude declined over 1 per cent to trade below the \$70-a-barrel mark.

## Noel Tata Announces Exit As Voltas Chairman, Says 72nd AGM Will Be His Last

Mumbai,30/6: Almost a week after announcing his decision to step down as chairman of Trent, Noel Tata on Tuesday said he will also relinquish the chairmanship of Tata Group company Voltas. Addressing shareholders at the cooling products maker's 72nd annual general meeting (AGM) here, the 69-year-old said the meeting would be his last as chairman of the company, bringing to a close a leadership role he has held since 2017. "As you might be aware, this will be my last annual general meeting as Chairman," Tata told shareholders during his address. Expressing confidence in the company's future, Tata said Voltas has built a strong leadership pipeline through a mix of internal promotions and external hiring, which he believes will help sustain growth across its businesses. "The company has developed our next generation of



leaders, from both in-house promotions and lateral hires. I am confident that with the close cooperation of seasoned practitioners and new talent, your company will continue to take big strides in all business segments," he said. Thanking shareholders, employees and business partners for their continued support, Tata said he was pleased with the company's current position and optimistic about its future

trajectory. "I would like to sincerely thank all our shareholders, colleagues and partners for your trust, understanding and constant support over the years," he said. Tata joined the board of Voltas on January 27, 2003, and was appointed non-executive chairman on September 1, 2017, succeeding Ishaat Hussain. His announcement comes just days after he made a similar statement

at the annual general meeting of Trent on June 23, indicating that he would step down as chairman of the Tata Group's retail arm as well. Noel Tata, who also serves as chairman of Tata Trusts, the largest shareholder of Tata Sons, will turn 70 in November this year. Under the Companies Act, 2013, a managing director or whole-time director cannot be appointed or continue in office after the age of 70 without fulfilling prescribed conditions. However, the provision does not apply to non-executive chairpersons. "I have great satisfaction that Voltas stands strong today, having entered the new financial year on a strong note. Our room air conditioning business crossed the milestone of 1 million units in a record 81 days, reaffirming its undisputed market leadership," he said.

## India's Fiscal Deficit In April-May At 9.6 Pc Of Full Year Target: Govt

New Delhi,30/6: India's fiscal deficit stood at Rs 1.624 lakh crore in April-May of financial year 2026-27, which accounts for 9.6 per cent of the full-year target, data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) showed on Tuesday. The government has fixed a fiscal deficit target of Rs 16.96 lakh crore for the full financial year (FY27), which shows that the figures for the first two months reflect a strong fiscal position with the country on track to meet the target set in the Budget for 2026-27. In the corresponding period of FY26, the fiscal deficit stood at Rs 13,163 crore, or 0.8 per cent of the full-year target. The Government recorded a fiscal surplus of Rs 2 lakh crore in May, compared with a surplus of Rs 1.73 lakh crore in May last year. In April, the



government had reported total receipts of Rs 2.13 lakh crore and total expenditure of Rs 5.75 lakh crore, which left a fiscal deficit of around Rs 3.62 lakh crore for the first month of the financial year, according to the monthly data. Non-tax revenue stood at Rs 3.27 lakh crore in May, compared with Rs 2.90 lakh crore in the same

month last year. The May number came after the Reserve Bank of India's Central Board approved a surplus transfer of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to the central government for FY26. Capital expenditure in May stood at Rs 61,200 crore, compared with Rs 61,600 crore in the same month of the previous year. For April-May, however,

capital expenditure rose to Rs 2.51 lakh crore from Rs 2.21 lakh crore a year earlier. Gross tax revenue for April-May stood at Rs 5.25 lakh crore, compared with Rs 5.15 lakh crore in the same period last year, the data showed. The Government achieved its fiscal deficit target of 4.4 per cent in the financial year 2025-26 and has lowered the target further to 4.3 per cent of GDP for the current financial year as part of the fiscal consolidation process. A decline in the fiscal deficit strengthens the fundamentals of the economy and paves the way for growth with price stability. It leads to a reduction in borrowing by the government, thus leaving more funds in the banking sector for lending to corporates and consumers which leads to higher economic growth.

## Sensex ends 250 pts lower, Nifty slips below 23,900

Mumbai: The Indian equity markets ended in negative territory on Tuesday, with IT stocks emerging as the biggest drag, while electric vehicle (EV) stocks such as Ather Energy and Ola Electric rallied following the Delhi government's announcement of a new EV policy aimed at accelerating electric vehicle adoption and improving air quality. The Nifty closed at 23,865.75, down 80.50 points or 0.34 per cent, slipping below the psychological 24,000 mark, while the Sensex settled at 76,478.67, lower by 249.70 points or 0.33 per cent. The broader market remained resilient, with the Nifty Smallcap 100 rising 1.02 per cent and the Nifty Midcap 100 gaining 0.37 per cent. Among EV-focused companies, Ola Electric shares closed in the green at Rs 43.76 apiece, up 8.37 per cent, while Ather Energy shares ended at Rs 1,140.55, gaining 5.24 per cent. The gains came after the Delhi government on Monday unveiled its EV policy to improve air quality and accelerate electric vehicle adoption in the national capital. In contrast, several conventional automobile stocks remained under pressure. Hero MotoCorp declined 0.30 per cent, Bharat Forge slipped 0.96 per cent and Eicher Motors fell 4.38 per cent. Tata Motors gained 1.87 per cent, while Bosch rose 0.29 per cent. Nifty Midsmall Healthcare emerged as the top sectoral gainer, surging 1.45 per cent, followed by Nifty

Chemicals (1.42 per cent), Nifty Realty (1.31 per cent) and Consumer Durables (1.16 per cent), among others. On the BSE, Maruti, Titan, Bajaj Finance, Etemal, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel, IndiGo, Trent and NTPC were among the major gainers. Infosys, ITC, HCL Tech, TCS and Tata Steel were among the top losers, with the IT index declining over 2 per cent. The rupee ended the day at 94.66 per dollar against its previous close of 94.54 per dollar, marking its first quarter-on-quarter gain since March 2025. Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, noted, "Indian rupee depreciated for the third consecutive session, weighed down by persistent safe-haven flows into the greenback and strong corporate dollar demand. Broader risk-off sentiment across global markets continues to keep the domestic currency under pressure." As per the analyst, "Spot USDINR faces immediate resistance at 95.10, while a breakdown below 94.40 will act as key support." Market analyst Vipin Dixena noted, "With Nifty ending below 24,000 and broader sentiment turning cautious amid profit booking and sectoral selling. This is still a consolidation phase, not a trend reversal." As per Dixena, EV stocks have shown relative strength even in a down market, which signals long-term conviction. "The macro story remains intact, but sentiment needs 1-2 sessions to reset before the next leg up," Dixena said.

## US refinery capacity dips in 2025, down by 1% YoY: US Energy Administration

New Delhi, 30/6: US refining capacity decreased during 2025 to stand at 18.2 million barrels per calendar day on January 1, 2026. This decline represents a drop of over 250,000 barrels per calendar day, or about 1 per cent, compared with the prior year. The contraction comes amid high-profile plant shutdowns on both the West and Gulf coasts, which restricted the overall domestic processing infrastructure. According to the US Energy Information Administration report, the total operable atmospheric distillation capacity stood at this lower level on January 1, 2026. The latest

report includes 130 operable refineries, down by two facilities compared to 2025. "LyondellBasell ended refining operations at its 263,776-b/cd refinery in Houston in March 2025," the report stated. "Phillips 66 ceased operations at its 138,700-b/cd refinery in Los Angeles in October 2025," the document noted, adding that "combined, the closure of the two facilities represents a reduction in operable US refinery capacity of about 400,000 b/d." While the direct loss from these two major sites neared 400,000 barrels per day, the broader structural impact was partially mitigated. The total

national contraction stopped at 250,000 barrels per calendar day because minor adjustments elsewhere countered the closures. The loss of capacity from the two facilities is partly offset by marginal capacity increases at other, existing refineries. Geographically, the impact of these closures varies significantly by region. The shutdown of the Phillips 66 facility altered the energy landscape in California. The report noted that the plant reflects a relatively small share of total domestic capacity, but its closure marks a 5 per cent reduction in refinery capacity



on the West Coast. Regional supply dynamics complicate the situation further because West Coast markets operate with limited infrastructure links to other major oil hubs. "Relatively little pipeline capacity exists to supply petroleum products from large

refinery hubs on the U.S. Gulf Coast to the West Coast," the report added. The agency explained that "reductions in refinery capacity on the West Coast can have a larger impact on fuel availability in the region compared with other regions in the United States." Further changes occurred after the formal reporting period ended. Valero's 145,000-barrels-per-day Benicia refinery remained inside the initial data pool because it was operational on January 1, 2026. However, that facility subsequently ceased refining operations, and its capacity was removed from the

monthly capacity estimates as of March 2026. In contrast, the Gulf Coast absorbed its respective closure with less disruption. The LyondellBasell Houston refinery had greater distillation capacity, but its closure represented a reduction of only 3 per cent of regional refinery capacity on the US Gulf Coast, which is a region where more fuel is produced than consumed. Boosted by minor expansions at nearby sites, the overall Gulf Coast regional capacity decreased by less than 2 per cent during 2025. Company rankings adjusted slightly due to these

structural shifts. The three largest domestic refiners--Marathon, Valero, and ExxonMobil--all logged calendar day capacity gains of less than 1 per cent, which likely stem from small-scale process improvements rather than major capacity expansions. Phillips 66 dropped in total capacity due to its California shutdown, while marginal gains allowed Chevron to overtake PBF Energy as the fifth-largest domestic refiner. Motiva's Port Arthur facility remains the largest single U.S. refinery on a calendar-day basis at 656,000 barrels per calendar day.

## Kangana Ranaut wraps up shooting for 'Queen 2'

Kangana Ranaut has officially completed filming for 'Queen 2', the much-awaited sequel to her acclaimed film 'Queen'. The actor-filmmaker shared the update on her Instagram stories, sharing a glimpse of the wrap-up celebrations with the cast and crew after an extensive production schedule that began earlier this year. The behind-the-scenes clip showed Ranaut celebrating the conclusion of the shoot alongside the film's team, signalling the end of principal photography. With filming now complete, the project enters the post-production stage ahead of its theatrical release. While the makers are yet to announce an official release date, 'Queen 2' marks the return of Ranaut's celebrated character, Rani, whose journey of self-discovery made the original film one of the most memorable Hindi films of the past decade. The original 'Queen', released in 2014, was directed by Vikas Bahl and received widespread critical acclaim. Kangana Ranaut delivered a career-defining performance as Rani Mehra, a sheltered young woman from Delhi who embarks on her honeymoon alone after her fiancé played by Rajkumar Rao, calls off their wedding. During her journey through Europe, Rani gains confidence, embraces independence and rediscovers herself. The film featured Rajkumar Rao as Vijay, Rani's fiancé, Lisa Haydon as her free-spirited friend Vijayalakshmi, Mish Boyko as Oleksander and Jeffrey Ho as Taka. It was produced by Anurag Kashyap, Vikramaditya Motwane and Madhu Mantena, with music composed by Amit Trivedi.



## Shreemayee Mishra returns to silver screen with political drama 'Pashapali'

Actress-turned-politician Shreemayee Mishra is all set to make her comeback to the Odia film industry with the political drama 'Pashapali'. The film was officially launched with a traditional muhurat ceremony on the occasion of Deva Snana Purnima at the Jagannath Temple and Maa Saheswari Peetha in Salepur. Set against the backdrop of contemporary politics, 'Pashapali' aims to portray the changing political landscape and the power dynamics shaping present-day governance. The film, subtitled 'The Game of Politics', is expected to offer a realistic depiction of political developments and the challenges associated with public life. Shreemayee Mishra, who transitioned from films to active politics in recent years, will be seen in a double role. According to the makers, the film also draws inspiration from real-life political experiences, adding to the anticipation surrounding her return to the big screen. The film is being produced by Prashant Kumar Kar under the banner of Bikala Nanda Kar Production, with Dillip Kumar Das serving as the chief advisor. Soumyan Sanjay Nayak has directed the film, while veteran composer Malay Mishra has scored the music. Playback singers Rituraj, Krishna Beura and Ira Mohanty have lent their voices to the soundtrack. The cast also includes Prithviraj Nayak, Shubhranshu Nayak, Itishree and Rajashree, while Dushmant will be seen portraying a negative character for the first time. Based on a concept book written by Prashant Karak, 'Pashapali' is expected to feature fictional characters inspired by the state's contemporary political landscape. While the makers have not revealed further details, the film has already generated interest for its political theme and Shreemayee Mishra's return to acting.



## SPORTS

### 1st T20I: When And Where To Watch ENG Vs IND, Know All Details

Durham: India begins the second leg of its United Kingdom tour with a challenging five-match T20I series against England, hoping to leave behind the disappointment of a winless trip to Ireland. The opening fixture at the Riverside Ground in Chester-le-Street offers Shreyas Iyer's side an immediate chance to rebuild confidence against one of the format's strongest teams. The visitors struggled to find consistency during the Ireland series, where batting failures ultimately proved costly. As a result, team selection has become a major talking point ahead of Wednesday's encounter. Teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi remains firmly in the spotlight after watching both Ireland matches from the dugout. Whether India opts for continuity or introduces fresh energy at the top of the order could become one of the defining decisions of the evening. Captain Shreyas Iyer also enters the contest under scrutiny following his first series in charge. While his leadership credentials are well established from franchise



cricket, England presents a far sterner examination. Beyond tactical decisions, India will also need meaningful contributions from Iyer with the bat to stabilise an inconsistent middle order. England, led by Harry Brook, returns home after another impressive World Cup campaign that ended in the semi-finals. Their batting depth and familiarity with local conditions make them favourites heading into the series opener, although they will be wary of an Indian side capable of responding strongly after recent setbacks. India's bowling attack has received a timely boost with the return of Varun Chakaravathy, whose variations could prove vital against England's attacking batters. Early wickets with the new ball and disciplined middle-over bowling will be essential if the visitors are to put pressure on the hosts. With four matches still to follow, neither side will define its campaign in Durham. However, a winning start would provide valuable momentum, making the opening clash an important opportunity for both teams to set the tone for what promises to be a highly competitive series.

### Hockey India Announces Anmol Ekka-Led Junior Men's Squad For Belgium Exposure Tour

New Delhi: Hockey India on Tuesday announced the 22-member Junior Men's squad for the upcoming exposure tour of Belgium, scheduled from 5 to 18 July 2026. The tour will be the team's first assignment under newly appointed coach Frederic Soyez and will serve as a key preparatory phase ahead of the FIH Hockey Men's Junior Asia Cup later this year. The young Indian side will face some of Europe's strongest hockey nations during the tour,

playing two matches each against Austria and Belgium, and one match each against Germany and the Netherlands. The exposure tour is expected to provide valuable international match experience while helping the team test its combinations and playing style ahead of the continental tournament. Defender Anmol Ekka has been entrusted with the captaincy for the upcoming exposure tour. The goalkeeping unit comprises Vivek Lakra

and Kunal Tewatia. The defensive line features captain Anmol Ekka, Rohit Kullu, Chirag, Ravinder, Prasant Barla, Sanjit Tirkey and V. Manimaran. The midfield will be occupied by Adrohit Ekka, Harpal, Jeetpal, Mukesh Toppo, Mannu Malik and Ritik Lakra. The forward line consists of Ajeet Yadav, Prabhdeep Singh, Arjun Hargude, Aryan Xess, Lovenoor Singh, Mohd. Konain Dad and Gursewak Singh.

### Lock Upp 2: Sunita Ahuja's Candid Remarks on Govinda's Alleged Affairs and Shooting Incident Leave Fans Stunned



Sunita Ahuja grabbed attention on the premiere episode of Lock Upp: Sach Ya Saza after making candid comments about husband Govinda, speaking about past rumours surrounding their marriage and joking about the actor's accidental shooting incident. Hosted by Farah Khan and Riteish Deshmukh, the reality show premiered on Netflix on June 27. During a conversation on the show, Farah Khan referred to an old statement by Sunita in which she had said she would want a son like Govinda but not a husband. Explaining her remark, Sunita said she had stood by Govinda through the years despite rumours about his alleged affairs. She suggested that enduring challenges in a relationship had shaped her perspective. Govinda has been linked with several actresses over the years. However, he has never publicly confirmed the affair rumours. Sunita also referred to Govinda's accidental shooting incident in October 2024, when the actor suffered a gunshot wound to his leg after his licensed revolver accidentally discharged at his Mumbai residence. While discussing the incident, she made humorous remarks, saying she was away from Mumbai at the time and jokingly dismissed speculation that she had anything

to do with the accident. Govinda had earlier stated that the firearm accidentally discharged while he was handling it before leaving for a flight. He later recovered fully after medical treatment. Clips from the episode quickly circulated across social media, drawing mixed reactions from viewers. Some users described Sunita's honesty as refreshing and appreciated her candid personality. Others found her remarks surprising, while a section of Govinda's fans criticised her comments, saying they portrayed the actor in a negative light. The episode sparked widespread discussion online, with viewers debating whether her statements reflected humour, honesty or both. Govinda and Sunita Ahuja married in 1987 before

the actor became a major Bollywood star. The couple kept their marriage private for nearly two years before publicly confirming it following the birth of their daughter, Tina Ahuja. They are also parents to their son, Yashvardhan Ahuja. Over the years, Sunita has occasionally spoken publicly about the ups and downs in their marriage, including rumours that have surrounded Govinda's personal life. Lock Upp Season 2 is hosted by Farah Khan and Riteish Deshmukh and streams on Netflix. The latest season features contestants including Ram Kapoor, Sunita Ahuja, Dheeraj Dhoopar, Harshad Chopda, Shivangi Joshi, Shreya Kalra, Yogesh Rawat, Akanksha Choudhary and several other television and digital personalities.

