We are really grateful that we were able to do this (series win against England). I'm really proud of my team the way we played this series. It was really important to get that momentum and I'm really happy with the way we all contributed

- India captain Harmanpreet Kaur

Sports Nation

The last time the Indian team had a worse ranking was in December 2016 when it was placed at 135. India's best ever ranking was 94 in February 1996

New Delhi

THE Indian men's football team slumped to its lowest ranking in nine years as it dropped six places to 133rd

in the FIFA chart issued on Thursday, courtesy two loss-

India lost to Thailand (0-2) in an international friendly on June 4 before suffering a defeat to lower ranked Hong Kong (0-1) in an Asian Cup qualifying round match, leading to head coach Manolo Marquez's parting of ways with

es in June.

the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

The last time the Indian team had a worse ranking was in December 2016 when it was placed at 135. India's best ever ranking was 94 in February 1996.

The Indian team currently has 1113.22 rating points as against 1132.03 previously. It occupies the 24th place

among 46 Asian countries led by Japan (17th rank).

Nothing has been going right for the Indian men's team. The loss against Hong Kong has put the side in a difficult position in its bid to qualify for the 2027 Asian

The team logged just one win from its last eight matches under Marquez's tutelage, the lone victory coming against Maldives in March. This year, India have so far played four matches, out of which they have won one, drew another, and lost two. The poor results prompted the return of former skipper and iconic striker Sunil Chhetri to the squad but that has done lit-

tle to improve the team's

fortunes. India's next scheduled international match is an away fixture against Singapore in the third round of Asian Cup qualifiers in October. World champions Argentina leads the overall chart of 210 countries, followed by Spain, France, England, Brazil, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Croatia.



Root's unbeaten 99 leads England to 251/4 on Day 1

Injured Rishabh Pant under medical supervision: BCCI

LONDON

SEASONED batter Joe Root made a solid unbeaten 99 as England reached 251 for four at close on Day 1 of the third Test against India at Lord's here on Thursday.

Root (99 batting) and skipper Ben Stokes (39 batting) were at the crease when the stumps were drawn.

India had success in the first and final sessions of the day as pacer Nitish Kumar Reddy, premier quick Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Ravindra Jadeja were among the wickets.

wicketkeeper India Rishabh Pant is "under the supervision of medical team" after he walked off the field during the second session's after suffering a blow to his left index finger, the BCCI said Thursday.

The Board said in a statement that Pant is being monitored by the medical team as he was replaced by Dhruv Jurel behind the wickets.

"Team India vice-captain Rishabh Pant got hit on his left index finger. He is receiving treatment at the moment



and under the supervision of the medical team. Dhruv Jurel is currently keeping wickets in Rishabh's absence," the BCCI said.

Pant was replaced by Jurel, who is not in the playing XI for the third Test, after onfield treatment did not help the India vice-captain recuperate sufficiently.

Pant was grimacing in pain after putting in a dive to stop a delivery on his left, which Jasprit Bumrah had sprayed down the leg side in the 34th over of the innings

during the second session. Pant had managed to get his hands on the ball but could not stop it entirely as England batters Joe Root and Ollie Pope scampered for a

The play was then held up for a while as Pant received treatment on his hand from the Indian support staff, but the wicketkeeper kept shrugging his hands when the action resumed. Eventually, Pant left the field after the end of Bumrah's over with Jurel taking over the charge of wicketkeeping.

ENGLAND: 251 for 4 in 83 overs (Joe Root batting 99, Ben Stokes batting 39, Ollie Pope 44; Nitish Kumar Red-

Novak reaches a record 14th Wimbledon semifinal

LONDON: At least Novak Djokovic could laugh about it immediately afterward.

Yes, he took what he called a "nasty" and "awkward" fall on his second match point at Wimbledon on Wednesday. Yes, he slid into the splits and ended up facedown on the Centre Court grass. And, yes, those sorts of things aren't ideal for a 38-year-old seeking an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title.

Still, Djokovic dusted himself off and took the next two points, reaching the semifinals at the All England Club for a men's-record 14th time with a 6-7 (6), 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 victory over No. 22 seed Flavio Cobolli to set up a showdown against No. 1 Jannik Sinner.

"Obviously, (my) body is not the same today like it was before," Djokovic said at his news conference, "so I guess the real impact or effect of what happened, I will feel tomorrow. So let's see. I'm hoping in the next 24, 48 hours, that the severity of ... what happened is not too bad, that I'll be able to play at my best and free of pain in two days."

That's when he will take on three-time major champion Sinner, who didn't play like someone dealing with an injured right elbow while using terrific serving and his usual booming forehand to beat 10th-seeded Ben Shelton 7-6 (2), 6-4, 6-4.

"It's going to take the best of me at the moment to beat Jannik. I mean, I know that," said Djokovic, who has lost his last four meetings with Sinner, including in the French Open semifinals last month.

Djokovic is 2-0 against Sinner at Wimbledon, eliminating him in the 2023 semifinals and 2022 quarterfinals.



Against Cobolli - like Sinner, a 23-year-old from Italy — the late-match tumble was not the only thing that was far from smooth for Djokovic. He served for the opening set at 5-3 but got broken at

He later was a point from owning that set before first-time major quarterfinalist Cobolli came through.

Djokovic did stretches and breathing exercises at changeovers. He whacked his shoe with his racket after one miss in the fourth set. He seemed bothered at times by the bright sun above Centre Court.

He also showed off all of his considerable skills, accumulating 13 aces, holding in 19 of 21 service games, using a dropshot-lob-drop-shot combination to take one point and limiting his unforced errors to $2\hat{2}$ — half as many as Cobolli.

On Friday, Djokovic will try to reach his seventh consecutive final at the All England Club and get closer to equaling Roger Federer's men's mark of eight trophies there. The other men's semifinal is two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, who defeated Djokovic in the 2023 and 2024 finals, against Taylor Fritz.

Sachin's portrait unveiled in MCC Museum at Lord's

LONDON: A portrait of the legendary Sachin Tendulkar was unveiled in the MCC Museum at Lord's before the start of the third Test between India and England here on Thursday.

The portrait, which has been painted by Stuart Pearson Wright from a photograph taken by the artist at his home 18 years ago, will remain in the MCC Museum until later this year and will then be relocated to the Pavilion.

"As the work progressed, so did Pearson Wright's approach, eventually ending with oil on abraded aluminium. The abstract background illustrates Tendulkar's timelessness, unrestricted by any era or specific location," a release said.

Pearson Wright has previously painted portraits of Kapil Dev, Bishan Singh Bedi, and Dilip Vengsarkar.

Tendulkar was quoted as saying, "It's a huge honour. In 1983, when India won the World Cup, it was my first introduction to Lord's.

"I saw our captain, Kapil Dev, lift the trophy. That moment sparked my cricketing journey. Today, with my portrait going up inside the Pavilion, feels like it's come full circle. When I reflect on my career, it brings a smile to my face. This is truly special." "Unlike the previous paintings, which were full-length, the portrait of Tendulkar is a larger-than-life image of his head and shoulders," the release added.

"The Lord's Portrait Programme has been running in its current



form for three decades, but MCC has been collecting art and artefacts since the Victorian period, opening a dedicated museum in the 1950s making it the oldest sporting museum in Europe.

"The Long Room Gallery is the oldest and most iconic gallery in sport. The Club currently houses around 3,000 pictures, nearly 300 of which are portraits."

Pearson Wright said: "It was clear that MCC didn't want this portrait to be in the same format as the previous Indian cricket portraits I made, so a fresh approach was taken with this one." "I decided on a composition which focused more on Sachin's head and also using a heroic larger-than-lifesize scale to give the painting a sense of gravitas and power."

"I have often painted a portrait with an abstract background, often a plain colour, rather than paint a rendition of an interior or exterior space. This is largely to give focus to the subject's features and to minimise a context which might define the subject in some way."

Principal, staffer held for menstrual check of students

Minister Devendra Fadnavis has issued directives for stringent action against those responsible for the alleged stripping of girl students at a school to check if they were menstruating, Minister Girish Mahajan said on Thursday.

The minister told the legislative assembly that the CM has ordered a probe into the private school in Thane dis-

Mahajan said strict action will be taken against the One-fifth of women, girls

in south Asia abstain from daily activities while menstruating: Lancet study

Congress' Nana Patole raised the matter in the Lower House, expressing concerns that such an incident

Maha CM Fadnavis orders probe after Thane school staff allegedly strip girl students to check for menstruation

could take place in a progressive state like Maharashtra. Jitendra Awhad of NCP

(SP) said the school principal involved is herself a woman. The police have arrested the principal and another staffer over the alleged stripping of



the girls. Stressing that the police have already acted in

the case, Mahajan assured the House that a probe would dent and strict action would

Congress legislator Jyoti Gaikwad also demanded that those guilty should not be spared. She said facilities like sanitary napkin vending machines and water are necessary in schools.

The incident took place at the school in the Shahapur area of Thane district on Tuesday after bloodstains were found in its toilet, ac-

It sparked outrage among hapur police station said. tested on the school premises on Wednesday and sought action against the management and teachers involved in the episode.

The police on Wednesday night arrested the school's principal and a woman attendant who allegedly stripped the girls, studying in Classes 5 to 10, and checked their private parts for menstrua-

against eight perunder Bharatiya sons Nyaya Sanhita sections 74 (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and 76 (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe) and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POC-

Six Naxalites held from **Chhattisgarh's Sukma**

The four told police that they planned to plant an IED in the jungles between Kottacheru and Gorkha villages to target security personnel but failed to do so due to increase in patrolling

Sukma

SIX Naxalites were arrested from separate places in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, a police official said on Thursday.

Kunjam Muka (37) and Madvi Muya (30), carrying rewards of Rs 1 lakh and Rs 2 lakh, respectively, were held on Tuesday from Pilavaya village under Konta police station limits, the official said.

"Muka was active as a Janatana Sarkar head under Konta Area Committee of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). Muya was its militia commander, he added. The two were involved in firing on security forces at Banda polling booth during assembly elections in 2023 and killing a civilian in Gangrajpad village in 2024," he added.

The other four were identified as Madvi Sukka (35), Sodi Chandru (28), Muchaki Lakhma (27) and Sodhi Deva (24), who are lower

rung ultras, the official said. were nabbed Tuesday between

Etegatta and Gorkha villages in Bhejji area following a tip. We seized a tiffin bomb weighing 3 kg, five detonators, cordex wire and electric

wire. The four told police they planned to plant an IED in the jungles between Kottacheru and Gorkha villages to target security personnel but failed to do so due to increase in patrolling," the official said



Guj bridge collapse toll 15: Oppn glare on 'BJP's loot raj'

NEW DELHI: The collapse of the four-decade-old Gambhira-Mujpur bridge in Gujarat's Vadodara district, which claimed 15 lives, has triggered a wave of criticism from Opposition

Congress held the BJP-led state and central governments accountable, accusing them of negligence, corruption and misplaced priorities in governance. The party's president Mallikarjun Kharge condemned the BJP's handling of infrastructure safety.

"Accidents have become a common occurrence in the country. Sometimes a train accident, sometimes a bridge developing cracks right after its inauguration. The country hasn't even recovered from the plane crash when news of a bridge collapse in Gujarat came yesterday. 12 innocent lives were lost," Kharge wrote on X. "In the name of 'governance,' the BJP leadership and government, busy only with speeches and advertising, have crossed all limits of indifference. This is the result of a leadership crisis, rampant corruption, lack of capacity to run the government, and incompetence. We hope the people of the country are watching this and will give a fitting response when



the time comes." The All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) also weighed in, demanding accountability and urgent infrastructure assessments across BJP-ruled states. "Every bridge, every road, every inch of infrastructure in Double Engine states must undergo immediate and thorough safety audits," the party posted on X.

Highlighting another incident in Rajasthan, AITC wrote: "After the deadly bridge collapse in Vadodara that claimed 11 lives, another glaring failure has surfaced. In Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu district, the road connecting Baghwali-Jahaj to NH 52 has been completely washed away by rain." The party alleged systemic corruption, saying: "Why does this keep happening? Substandard materials are used in critical infrastructure. Funds meant for public safety are siphoned off by local BJP leaders. Contracts are handed out not on merit, but in exchange for kickbacks.



Hindi-Marathi language row, saying they only beat "poor people" for not speaking Marathi. Speaking to reporters, Nishikant Dubey said, "You beat up the poor. But Mukesh Ambani lives there, he speaks very less Marathi. If you have guts, go to him. Mahim has a large Muslim population. If you have guts, go there. SBI chairman doesn't speak Marathi, try hitting him." Nishikant Dubey further

> clarified that his earlier statement regarding the economy of Maharashtra has been misinterpreted. He said, "There is something which I said and which has been destroyed - Maharashtra has a great contribution in the economy of this country... What I said was misconstrued by people. But what I am saying is that we too have a contribution in the tax paid by Mumbai or Maharashtra. This has nothing to do with the Thackeray family or the Maratha. SBI and LIC, who pay tax, have their headquarters in Mumbai," he

Earlier Dubey strongly reacted to MNS chief Raj Thackeray's



remark. Raj had reportedly instructed his party workers to "beat but don't make a video," referring to individuals unwilling to speak in Marathi. In response, Dubey had said, "What are you doing, whose bread are you eating? You people are surviving on our money. What kind of industries do you have? We have all the mines in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. What mines do you have? All semiconductor refineries are in Gujarat." Challenging the intent behind the aggression towards Hindi-speaking people, Dubey added, "If you have the courage to beat Hindi speakers, then beat those who speak Urdu, Tamil, and Telugu too. If you're such a 'boss', come out of Maharashtra--come to Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu. 'Tumko patak patak ke maarenge'..."

"There is something which I said and which has been destroyed - Maharashtra has a great contribution in the economy of this country...What I said was misconstrued by people. But what I am saying is that we too have a contribution in the tax paid by Mumbai or Maharashtra. This has nothing to do with the Thackeray family or the Maratha. SBI and LIC, who pay tax, have their headquarters in Mumbai," he added. The controversy began when some traders in Mumbai were allegedly attacked by MNS workers for not speaking Marathi. The MNS had been demanding that traders and shopkeepers in the city speak Marathi, leading to tensions between the two groups. The police have been working to maintain law and order in the city and prevent any further escalation of the situation. -- ANI