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A part of seaside ring road in Orissa's temple town of Puri which has been washed away by menacing sea waves.

## Puri faces threat of sea fury

**PURI (ORISSA):** Orissa's temple town of Puri, an important religious centre in the country and a major tourists' hub of eastern India, is currently facing a threat from an unexpected quarter — menacing waves from the nearby sea.

Apart from engulfing a part of the local beach, a hugely popular spot among the tourists visiting the temple town, sea waters have already destroyed a section of the marine drive prompting the authorities to stop traffic on the road.

The speed in which the sea is capturing land has forced the locals to spend sleepless nights fearing for their lives and properties. The local business community which include hoteliers and those involved in the travel trade also apprehend that the town would soon lose its charm as a major tourism and religious destination if the government did not step in to ad-

dress the problem. The sea erosion in Puri has been taking place slowly since the last four to five years. However, the situation worsened last month when a portion of the marine drive was washed away by tidal wave.

### Panic-struck

Tourists in the nearby hotels panicked and wasted no time in leaving the place even as the authorities who were taken aback by the development tried to save the rest of the roads and the constructions nearby by putting sand bags.

Things have not yet improved despite repeated attempts made by the authorities to save the land from the menacing sea.

Just a fortnight before this incident, one person had died when sea waters entered into a seaside fishermen colony at Penthakata area of the town. The fishermen were residing there since ages.

Experts and organisa-

tions keeping a close watch on the development have given different opinions and views on the sudden erratic behaviour of the sea.

A team of scientists from an Institute of Oceanography Management who had visited the state early this month attributed the sea erosion at Puri as well as other places on the Orissa coast to the 2004 tsunami and 'the unusual activation of southwest monsoon'.

They reportedly recommended construction of walls along the coastline while describing the stretch between Puri and Konark as most vulnerable.

A team of experts from the centre as well as the state's forest and environment department who recently visited Puri held the violation in Coastal Regulation Zone norms responsible for the disaster. According to them construction activities was allowed between the High Tide Line and Low Tide Line.