

Meghalaya to hold meeting on July 24 amid farmers' cabbage price protest

Farmers protest by freely distributing six tonnes cabbage

Shillong, Jul 17: Farmers in Meghalaya's capital staged a unique protest on Thursday by distributing six tonnes of cabbage free of cost to the public. The symbolic act was aimed at drawing attention to the challenges faced by cultivators during the monsoon season and highlighting the urgent need for government intervention to address agricultural distress. Organizers explained that the protest was not merely about giving away produce but about sending a strong message regarding the plight of farmers who often struggle with low market prices, crop losses, and inadequate support systems. By offering their harvest to citizens without charge, the farmers sought to demonstrate both their generosity and their frustration at systemic neglect.



Crowds gathered in Shillong to receive the cabbage, with many expressing solidarity with the farmers' cause. Local farmer leaders stated that the protest was designed to raise awareness about the economic hardships caused by fluctuating demand, poor

storage facilities, and limited access to fair markets. They emphasized that while cabbage was chosen for this demonstration, the issue extends to multiple crops that suffer from similar challenges. The protest also underscored the broader concerns

of agricultural communities in Meghalaya, particularly during the monsoon season when heavy rains often damage crops and disrupt supply chains. Farmers reiterated their demand for better infrastructure, including cold storage units, improved

transportation networks, and stronger price support mechanisms to ensure that their produce reaches consumers at fair rates. By distributing their harvest freely, the farmers highlighted the paradox of abundance coexisting with economic struggle. Despite producing large quantities of vegetables, many cultivators are unable to secure sustainable incomes due to market volatility and lack of institutional safeguards. The symbolic protest has sparked discussions among policymakers, civil society groups, and citizens about the need for comprehensive agricultural reforms in the region. Observers noted that such demonstrations reflect the resilience of farmers and their determination to make their voices heard in the public sphere.

Meghalaya to pass resolution opposing Uranium mining: CM Sangma

Shiloong, Jul 17: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma announced on Friday that the state government will move a formal resolution in the upcoming Assembly session to oppose uranium mining in the state. The decision reflects the government's commitment to safeguarding the environment, protecting public health, and respecting the sentiments of local communities. Speaking to reporters, the Chief Minister emphasized that uranium mining has long been a sensitive issue in Meghalaya, particularly in districts where deposits are located. He noted that concerns raised by civil society groups, student organizations, and local communities regarding radiation risks, ecological damage, and displacement have been taken seriously by the government. "The people of Meghalaya have consistently voiced their opposition to uranium mining. As a responsible government, we must respect their concerns and ensure that our policies prioritize environmen-



tal sustainability and public welfare," Sangma stated. The resolution, once passed, will serve as a clear policy stance against uranium extraction in the state. Officials explained that the move is intended to prevent any future attempts to initiate mining projects without the consent of local communities and the state legislature. Environmental experts have warned that uranium mining could have long-term consequences for Meghalaya's fragile ecosystem, including contamination of water sources, soil degradation, and health

hazards for residents. The Chief Minister reiterated that the government's priority is to preserve the state's natural resources and promote sustainable development models that align with the aspirations of its people. The announcement has been welcomed by several organizations, including student unions and grassroots groups, who have campaigned against uranium mining for years. They view the resolution as a victory for community voices and a reaffirmation of Meghalaya's commitment to ecological balance.

Arunachal CM inaugurates State Guest House-II under Smart City

Itanagar, July 17: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday inaugurated the newly developed State Guest House-II under the Itanagar Smart City Mission, marking a significant milestone in the state's efforts to modernize infrastructure and enhance hospitality facilities in the capital. The facility, formerly known as Hotel Donyi Polo Ashok established in 1982, has now been completely retrofitted and transformed into a modern guest house with

elegant suites and premium amenities. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Chief Minister emphasized that the new guest house will strengthen Arunachal Pradesh's capacity to host dignitaries, officials, and tourists visiting Itanagar. "With this new facility, we are adding more quality accommodation for our guests and visitors," Khandu stated, highlighting the importance of hospitality infrastructure in projecting the state's image as a wel-

coming destination. The retrofitted guest house is designed to serve as a vital asset for the state government, providing accommodation for VVIPs, delegates, and other visitors while simultaneously promoting tourism and professional hosting standards in the capital. The transformation of the facility reflects the government's broader vision of integrating modern design, technology, and sustainability into public infrastructure projects. Officials accompanying the



Chief Minister noted that the renovation was carried

out under the Smart City Mission framework, which

prioritizes urban renewal, efficient resource management, and citizen-centric development. The guest house now features upgraded interiors, energy-efficient systems, and enhanced security measures, ensuring comfort and safety for all occupants. The inauguration also symbolizes the government's commitment to repurposing existing assets rather than relying solely on new construction. By retrofitting the decades-old Hotel Donyi Polo Ashok, the administra-

tion has preserved a piece of Itanagar's heritage while aligning it with contemporary needs. This approach demonstrates a balance between modernization and cultural continuity. The Chief Minister further stressed that the facility will play a crucial role in supporting the state's growing engagement with national and international stakeholders. With Arunachal Pradesh increasingly hosting conferences, cultural events, and official delegations, the

availability of high-quality accommodation is expected to enhance the state's reputation as a capable and professional host. Tourism officials added that the guest house will also indirectly benefit the local economy by attracting more visitors to Itanagar and encouraging longer stays. The upgraded infrastructure is expected to complement ongoing initiatives to promote Arunachal Pradesh as a destination for eco-tourism, adventure travel, and cultural exploration.

Tripura CM Manik Saha joins Census 2027 via online self-enumeration

Guwahati, July 17: Tripura Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha on Friday participated in the Census 2027 process by completing his self-enumeration online from his official residence, underscoring the importance of public participation in the nationwide exercise. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the Census is not merely a statistical exercise but serves as one of the key foundations for planning and implementing various developmental programmes across the country. Dr. Saha personally reg-



istered his details through the online self-enumeration portal, sending a strong message encouraging citizens to actively take part in the Cen-

sus 2027 process through the newly introduced digital facility. He said the self-enumeration system has been introduced to make the Census exercise simpler, more transparent, and technology-driven. Describing Census 2027 as highly significant, the Chief Minister urged people to participate in the process and contribute to the successful conduct of this important national exercise. The online self-enumeration facility is aimed at enhancing convenience and improving the efficiency of the census process while

promoting greater public involvement. The Chief Minister also pointed out that Tripura's participation in the digital census reflects the state's commitment to embracing modern governance tools. He reaffirmed that accurate census data will strengthen the government's ability to deliver targeted services and foster inclusive growth. The Census 2027 initiative marks a milestone in India's transition toward digital governance, combining tradition with innovation to ensure comprehensive coverage and citizen engagement.

Assam CM in talks with Aditya Dhar on Lachit biopic

Guwahati, July 17: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has revealed that he recently held discussions with filmmaker Aditya Dhar, director of the acclaimed movie Dhurandhar, regarding the possibility of a Hindi feature film on legendary Ahom general Lachit Borphukan. Speaking during a Facebook Live session on Thursday evening, Sarma emphasized that such a project would bring Borphukan's valor and leadership to a wider national and international audience. He noted that Dhar, who earned recognition for his directorial success, is among the most prominent names in contemporary Indian cinema. Sarma ex-



pressed confidence that a grand-scale cinematic por-

trayal of Borphukan would serve as a fitting tribute to the general's heroics, ensuring his legacy resonates far beyond Assam. The Ahom commander, celebrated for his decisive victory against the Mughal forces in the Battle of Saraighat, remains a symbol of courage and patriotism in Assam's history. The proposed film aims to emphasize his enduring significance in India's cultural and historical narrative. The proposed film aims to emphasize Borphukan's enduring significance in India's cultural and historical narrative, inspiring future generations with his story of leadership, resilience, and devotion to the motherland.

State Cabinet launches e-HRMS 2.0, drives Arunachal's growth decisions

Itanagar, July 17: The Arunachal Pradesh State Cabinet today announced the launch of e-HRMS 2.0, a modernized digital platform designed to streamline human resource management across government departments. The initiative marks a significant step toward enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability in governance. The upgraded system introduces advanced features for employee data management, service records, and performance monitoring, ensuring faster decision-making and improved delivery of public services. Officials highlighted that e-HRMS 2.0 will reduce paperwork, minimize de-



lays, and provide real-time access to critical information for administrators and employees alike. Alongside the launch, the Cabinet also took several key decisions aimed at accelerating Arunachal's growth trajectory. These include

measures to strengthen infrastructure development, expand digital connectivity in rural areas, and promote sustainable economic initiatives. The decisions reflect the government's commitment to inclusive growth and moderniza-

tion while preserving the state's unique cultural and environmental heritage. Chief Minister and Cabinet members emphasized that the integration of digital tools such as e-HRMS 2.0 will empower departments to function more effectively, ultimately benefiting citizens. They reiterated that the government remains focused on leveraging technology to drive development and ensure good governance. The Cabinet's announcements have been welcomed by stakeholders, with experts noting that such reforms will position Arunachal Pradesh as a leader in adopting digital governance practices among northeastern states.

Assam police rescue three trafficked victims from West Bengal

Tezpur, July 17: Assam Police announced today that three trafficked victims have been successfully rescued from West Bengal in a coordinated operation. According to officials, the rescue was carried out following intelligence inputs and swift action by specialized units. The victims, who had been trafficked across state borders, were located and safely brought back under police protection. Authorities confirmed that they are now receiving medical care and counseling support. Senior police officers emphasized that the operation reflects Assam's commitment to combating human trafficking and protecting vulnerable



individuals. They noted that cross-border collaboration with West Bengal authorities was crucial in ensuring the victims' safety and in initiating further investigation into traffick-

ing networks. The police have registered a case and are pursuing leads to identify and apprehend those responsible for the trafficking. Officials reiterated that strict action will be

taken against perpetrators, and efforts are underway to dismantle organized networks involved in such crimes. Human rights groups and social organizations have welcomed the rescue, urging continued vigilance and stronger preventive measures. They highlighted the need for community awareness programs and rehabilitation initiatives to support survivors and reduce the risk of re-trafficking. Assam Police reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding citizens and called upon communities to report suspicious activities promptly. The department stressed that public cooperation remains vital in the fight against trafficking.

Tripura CPI(M) leader repents describing IPS officer as ‘idiot’

Agartala, July 17: Tri-pura’s leader of the oppo-sition Jitendra Chaudhury on Thursday expressed regret calling an IPS offi-cer an “idiot” following an attack on CPI(M) work-ers allegedly by “goons of the ruling BJP” in South Tripura district a day ago. Chaudhury made the state-ment hours after the Tripu-ra chapter of the All India Services Association de-manded an apology from him for passing derogatory remarks about South Tripu-ra district Superintendent of Police Mourya Krishna.The CPI(M) leader claimed his Wednesday’s remark was made on the spur of the mo-ment as party workers were attacked by BJP’s goons “in the presence of policemen” at the event for which they had permission from the au-thorities.“We had organised



a programme to observe the second death anniversary of comrade Badal Shil who was killed by BJP goons at Chottakhola when he was returning home after submitting his nomination paper for Zilla Parishad elections in 2024,” Chaud-hury said.“Despite having

permission from the police authority, the BJP’s miscre-ants attacked our leaders and workers in the presence of police personnel to derail our programme,” he told reporters. The opposition leader claimed that he tried to contact the South Tripu-ra SP three times from the

spot, but the calls remained unattended. However, he said he could talk to DGP Anurag Dhankar.“

I was angry after the at-tack on our workers in the presence of police person-nel and an executive magis-trate. On the spur of the mo-ment, I described the SP as an idiot. I should not have uttered that word,” he said. In a statement, the All India Services

Association’s Tripura Chapter condemned the de-rogatory remarks made by the Leader of Opposition (LoP) against the SP.The association demanded that Chaudhury withdraw the comment and issue an un-conditional public apol-ogy, besides appealing to all public representatives, regardless of political af-filiation, to maintain civility and mutual respect.

Assam Rifles soldier killed in Nagaland laid to rest with full military honours

Guwahati, July 17: Havildar Mohd Iqbal of the As-sam Rifles, who was killed while on duty in Nagaland, was laid to rest with full military honours at his na-tive village of Kallar Mohra in Jammu and Kashmir’s Poonch district, as family members, Army personnel and local residents gathered to pay their final respects. The soldier’s mortal remains reached his village on July 15, where a large number of people assembled at his residence to bid him a final farewell. Army personnel paid floral tributes to the fallen soldier during the funeral ceremony, which was conducted with full military honours.Speaking to reporters, Iqbal’s son, Fasal Iqbal, said the family was proud of his father’s sacrifice in the service of the nation. “We feel proud that he made the ultimate sacrifice for the country. I feel good knowing he did something truly right for the country and made that sacrifice. It is a matter of pride for all of us,” he said.Fasal also expressed his determination to join the armed forces and continue his father’s legacy of serving the country.My resolve is to become a good offi-cer, serve the country, and take revenge on the enemies,” he said.Havildar Mohd Iqbal was serving with the Assam Rifles in Nagaland when he lost his life while carrying out



his official duties. Authorities have not released further details about the circumstances surrounding the incident. Meanwhile, the Assam Rifles also recently honoured another fallen soldier during a commemorative ceremony in Tripura. The force organised a wreath-laying ceremony at the Radhanagar Battalion to remember Rifleman (General Duty) Govind Singh of 28 Assam Rifles, who was killed in action on July 10, 1996, during a counter-insurgency oper-ation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Assam to restore forest cover in Behali, act against encroachers

Guwahati, July 17: Assam Forest Min-ister Jayanta Mallabaruah on Thursday said the state government would immedi-ately restore forest cover in areas of Be-hali Wildlife Sanctuary where large-scale destruction of trees has been reported, while warning of strict action against those responsible.After visiting the sanctuary in Biswanath district, the minister said satel-lite imagery had revealed that a sizeable stretch of forest, which was densely cov-

erage of forests,” he said.Mallabaruah alleged that the damage was caused by miscreants operating for personal ain and asserted that the state government had no role in such activities.“Some anti-social el-ements have carried out these acts for their own benefit. The government is taking the matter very seriously, and both the Forest Department and the police will initiate stringent action against those involved,” he said.Referring to the Assam-Arunachal



ered with trees around six months ago, had since been cleared.“We noticed through satellite images that a large portion of the forest has been destroyed over the past few months. That is why I came here person-ally to assess the situation on the ground,” Mallabaruah told reporters.He said senior officials from the Forest Department, As-sam Police, and other agencies accompa-nied him during the inspection and that a detailed assessment of the damage would be carried out.“Our immediate priority is to restore the forest. Wherever trees have been destroyed, we will undertake planta-tion drives without delay. Under no circum-stances will the government encourage the

Pradesh border, the minister clarified that the inter-state boundary issue should not be linked to forest destruction.“The border dispute is a separate matter and is being addressed through the regional committee mechanism in accordance with the direc-tions of the Gauhati High Court and the Supreme Court. But irrespective of the boundary issue, forests and trees must be protected. No one can justify felling trees in the name of a border dispute,” Malla-baruah said.He reiterated that the gov-ernment remains committed to protecting Assam’s forest resources and ensuring that those responsible for environmental dam-age are brought to justice.

Director MoRD visits Noklak, reviews Thonoknyu Aspirational Block

Impahal, July 17: Director, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and Central Pra-bhari Officer (CPO) for Thonoknyu Aspirational Block, Raj Priy Singh, visited Noklak district on July 14, 2026.During his visit, Singh held a review meeting with the District Ad-ministration and line departments for the Thonoknyu Aspirational Block Programme at the Conference Hall of the Superintendent of Police, Noklak.In his address, Singh highlighted the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 and the Government of India’s strategic plan to transform the country into a fully developed nation spearheaded by NITI Aayog. He asserted that the initiative is built on four core pillars-youth, the poor, women and farmers. He also spoke on the VB GRAM G (Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin) Act, outlining its four domains: water security through ponds, recharge structures and irrigation facilities; core rural infrastructure including roads, paths and public facilities; livelihood related infrastructure such as rural markets and storage facilities; and extreme weather mitigation through climate resilience and disaster proofing works.

Mizoram Congress plans to conduct a statewide protest opposition to the amendment of the FCRA

Aizawl, July 17: The Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) on Thursday announced a statewide ‘Black Day’ on July 21 in protest against the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, alleging that the legislation would impact the functioning of Christian orga-nisations.Addressing a press con-ference here, MPCC treasurer Dr Lal-malsawma Nghaka said the protest would be held across the state at noon.The party has invited church-es of different denominations and the general public to participate in the protest.

Nghaka alleged that the BJP-led Centre was seeking to use the pro-posed FCRA amendment to impose restrictions on the Christian com-munity by tightening regulations

Meghalaya Marks 108 Years of Garo Labour Corps Service

Shillong, July 17: Me-ghalaya observed the 108th Garo Labour Corps Day on July 16. The Tura Municipal Board organized events to honor the men who volun-teered for World War I logis-tics in France. These soldiers returned home to Tura on July 16, 1918. It was a proud day. Dignitaries laid wreaths at a temporary cenotaph in the Ringrey Urban Marketing Hub. Police provided a formal salute. The crowd observed two minutes of silence.Events moved to the District Audi-torium. Assembly Speaker Thomas A. Sangma served as chief guest. Housing Min-ister Marcuise N. Marak also attended. Officials handed out mementoes to 17 families of the original recruits. Fr. Janu-arius S. Sangma led prayers and shared stories from his grandfather, Rashal Ch. Mo-min. Thomas A. Sangma wants this history in school books. He pledged ₹2 lakh for research. The goal is to keep the heritage alive. Only 54 names currently sit on the cenotaph, but 456 men actual-ly reached France out of 500 selected. The Garo Culture and Heritage Preservation Committee is hunting for the rest. They want every name on the new Babupara war memorial. Construction sits at 90 percent capacity. Unrest caused recent delays. Minister Marcuise N.

Marak is pushing for state funds to finish the work. “I have already written to the Chief Minister, and he has agreed to sanction some funds,” the minister said. The project includes a museum for research and operations. Students finished the day with cultural shows.

Rape case surrenders, arrested

Shillong, July 17: A 21-year-old Shillong resi-dent wanted in connection with a POC SO and rape case surrendered before police at Laitumkhr ah Po-lice Station on July 16 and was subsequently arrested, East Khasi Hills Police said.

The accused, identified as Jonathan L Pachau, sur-rendered before the officer in charge of Laitumkhr ah Police Station. He has been booked in Laitumkhr ah PS Case No. 100/2026 under Sections 3, 4, 11 and 12 of the Protection of Chil-dren from Sexual Offenc-es (POCSO) Act, as well as PS Case No. 94/2026 under Section 64(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Police said he will be produced before the court. The arrest comes days after Meghalaya Po-lice issued an all-India lookout notice against the accused and constituted a special team to trace him.

Police had also been co-ordinating with Mizoram Police following informa-tion that he may have fled the state.The investigation is continuing, with police recording statements from additional complainants who have since come for-ward. Investigators had earlier confirmed that the statement of the first com-plainant, along with digital evidence, had already been recorded.Police have also indicated that they are ex-amine information sug-gesting there may be more victims linked to the case. Those who have contacted the police are being called to formally record their statements and lodge FIRs where applicable

Officials have urged the public not to treat allega-tions circulating on social media as established facts, stating that the authenti-city of claims made online is being verified as part of the investigation. A

chargesheet will be filed once the probe is complete. The case first came to light after photographs of the accused, along with un-verified allegations shared widely on social media, triggered public attention. The posts alleged that mul-tiple young women had been sexually assaulted by the accused over a period of time. However, police had maintained that only one formal FIR had been registered at Laitumkhr ah Police Station on July 7 and appealed to any oth-er alleged victims to ap-proach the police and file complaints.Authorities had earlier described the accused as absconding and launched efforts to trace him before his surren-der on Thursday. Police had also confirmed that they were treating the matter with seriousness and co-ordinating with law enforce-ment agencies outside Me-ghalaya during the search.

Meghalaya High Court Issues Rulings on 2014 Murder

Shillong, July 17: The Meghalaya High Court upheld the conviction and 10-year prison sentences for three men involved in a 2016 gang rape. Chief Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice W. Diengdoh rejected appeals from Cle-verstrein Marngar, Proning-star Marngar, and Basnes Rynthathiang. They remain guilty. The case involves the September 11, 2016 attack on a 15-year-old girl in West Khasi Hills.

Eight suspects were initial-ly arrested. Three were tried as juveniles, while five oth-ers faced a Special POC SO Court. Only three appealed to the High Court. The

bench dismissed claims of evidentiary contradictions. They relied on medical re-ports of physical injury and the survivor’s testimony. The court noted that there was “nothing in the cross” to discredit her evidence. It also confirmed that the prosecution established all foundational facts required under the POC SO Act.In a separate decision, the same bench addressed the 2014 murder of Prodis Nangbah. The victim was killed at his home on May 6, 2014, after he refused to sell cigaret-tes after hours. Two chil-dren witnessed the attack. The court upheld the life sen-tence for Salbinal Nangbah,

finding the children’s tes-timony credible. The bench rejected arguments against the identification process, noting the children already knew the suspect from their village. Identification was possible by candlelight.The court overturned the conviction of Belting Tyngkra in the same murder case. The children failed to iden-tify him during proceedings. The state failed to prove his guilt. Justices ordered his immediate release and the refund of any fines paid. The court also ordered a report on the status of a 3 lakh ru-pee compensation package for the victim’s family, due by September 3, 2026.



on foreign funding.He said the party would continue to oppose the legislation until it waswithdrawn.

According to him, the proposed amendment would severely affect

churches, NGOs and Christian or-ganisations that rely on financial assistance from overseas donors for their social, educational and charitable activities.He further

claimed that after the BJP came to power, FCRA licences of more than 20,000 organisations have been cancelled, including several in Mizoram.

It also alleged that even churches are currently facing restrictions in receiving foreign contributions.

The Congress leader said that the FCRA came into force on March 31, 1976, was amended in 1984, comprehensively revised in 2010 to strengthen regulation of fore-ign funding, and further tightened through amendments introduced by the BJP government in 2020.Ngha-ka said Christian organisations re-ceive a significant share of foreign charitable funding and claimed that the proposed FCRA Amend-ment Bill, 2026 could disproportionately affect the community.

NITI Aayog evaluates the effects of flooding in Arunachal Pradesh

Itanagar, July 17: A high-level team from NITI Aayog on Thurs-day arrived in Arunachal Pradesh to assess the damage caused by re-cent floods and discuss measures to strengthen disaster resilience, as the deluge has affected more than one lakh people across the state, officials said. The team, led by NITI Aayog member Dr Joram Aniya, included National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) member Rita Missal and senior officials from NITI Aayog, the NDMA and the Central Water Commission.The ongoing spell of rain-triggered floods and landslides has so far claimed seven lives, in-jured 29 people and affected 1,03,167 people across the northeastern state. The calamity has also caused exten-sive damage to infrastructure, houses, agriculture and horticulture, accord-ing to official reports.Chief Minis-ter Pema Khandu said the meeting focused on strengthening disaster resilience and advancing Arunachal Pradesh’s development priorities in view of the recurring natural disas-

ters faced by the state.Expressing gratitude to the visiting delegation, Khandu said the team’s visit would provide policymakers with a better understanding of the challenges faced by the people of the frontier state, especially in the wake of the recent floods.“I thank the delegation for visiting Arunachal Pradesh to gain first-hand insights into the challeng-es faced by our people, particularly in the wake of the recent floods,” the chief minister said in a post on X.He said such field visits are essen-tial for formulating effective policies and support mechanisms that reflect the realities on the ground.“Such on-ground assessments are vital for shaping policies and support mech-anisms that truly address the state’s unique needs,” Khandu added.High-lighting the need for a region-spec-ific approach to disaster management, the chief minister said Arunachal Pradesh’s unique geographical and climatic conditions demand tailored solutions. Disaster management in Arunachal Pradesh must be shaped

by the realities of our terrain, climate and people, not by one-size-fits-all policies,” Khandu said.The cumula-tive number of people affected in the state has risen to 1,03,167, with Up-per Siang emerging as the worst-hit district, affecting 49,259 people, fol-lowed by Siang (25,365), Kra Daadi (13,731), East Kameng (6,146), Upper Subansiri (3,467) and Namsai (2,657), according to official reports.Floods and landslides have damaged 622 houses across the state, including 454 kutcha houses, 100 pucca houses, 44 huts and 24 houses under other categoriesThe overall loss to agriculture and hor-ticulture has also mounted to 561.75 hectares, comprising 224 hectares of agricultural land and 337.75 hectares of horticulture plantationsThe chief minister expressed confidence that close coordination between the Centre and the state, backed by first-hand as-sessments by central agencies, would help strengthen disaster preparedness, improve resilience and ensure that sup-port measures are aligned with the state’s specific requirements.

Manipur Cong visits torched

Impahal, July 17: Opposi-tion Congress in Manipur on Thursday alleged that there was a serious lack of effective security coordination between the state government and the Central security forces while dealing with the protracted vi-olent crisis in Manipur.

A Congress team led by Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader K Meghachan-dra Singh visited Kanto Sa-bal at Leimakhong in Indian Army cantonment area to in-spect the six houses that were razed to ashes by a group of Kukis on July 11 last.Singh said that the burning of the houses was He pointed out that as the site was located very close to the gate of the GOC of 57th Mountain Di- vision, it reflected a lack of proper security coordination between the state gov-ernment and the Central security forces

AI “Super App” Developed by Jagan Mohan Reddy to Communicate With Party Cadre



Amaravati, July 17: Party president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has launched the ‘Jagan 2.0 Super App’, an AI-enabled platform designed to directly connect the leadership with grassroots workers while lowering the party’s reliance on traditional social media platforms, as part of a major digital push to rebuild the YSR Congress Party following its 2024 electoral defeat.Party cadre can use the app to report local problems, file complaints about suspected political harassment, view live party events, take part in campaigns, get organiza-

tional updates, and speak with party leadership directly.According to the YSRCP, the website would eventually function as the party’s one-stop digital ecosystem and incorporate its digital journal for documenting claimed instances of political victimization. YS Jagan’s app launch has also been compared to actor-turned-politician Vijay’s “My TVK” app, which has become a crucial organizational tool for Tamila-ga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), assisting with campaign activities, booth-level management, cadre mobilization, and real-time worker feedback.In antici-

tion of the 2029 elections, political observers perceive YS Jagan’s plan as a similar endeavor to bolster the party’s organizational infrastructure through technology.The Jagan 2.0 Super App, according to YSRCP sources, goes one step further by establishing an independent digital ecosystem where party workers can freely communicate, create campaign content using AI tools, document field-level issues, and stay directly connected with the leadership without solely depending on third-party social media platforms. This is in contrast to the My TVK app, which is primarily intended for organizational management and volunteer coordination. The app’s release coincides with YS Jagan’s repeated claims that YSRCP supporters’ posts are being censored or erased from mainstream social media.As the party starts its long-term organizational reconstruction process following its electoral defeat, party leaders claim the new platform would guarantee unbroken communication, quicker grievance redressal, and increased involvement with workers from the village level to the state leadership.

Opposition speculates on the delimitation position while MK Stalin maintains the center

New Delhi, July 17: MK Stalin has yet to unveil his cards. Prior to the Monsoon Session, which begins next Wednesday, both the opposition INDIA alliance and the ruling NDA are considering his DMK.Stalin informed his MPs during a meeting on Thursday that the party is waiting for the proposed Delimitation Bill.

The DMK president stated during the virtual meeting that Tamil Nadu’s interests and the party’s ideology will take precedence above political affiliations.According to sources, the DMK will choose its position on an issue-by-issue basis rather than immediately sid-

ing with the BJP or the Congress. According to sources, the DMK won’t make a final decision on the Delimitation Bill until the government makes the proposed legislation’s text public.If the Center tries again to pass the Delimitation Bill, Stalin’s 22 Lok Sabha seats would be crucial to the plans of both the government and the opposition in Parliament.The DMK was the most outspoken opponent of the measure when it was introduced in Parliament in April. Party officials burned copies of the bill, wore black to Parliament, and voted against it, which ultimately resulted in the bill’s rejection. A

lot has changed since April.DMK lost Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu and also its key ally, the Congress. The bitter DMK-Congress divorce has given hopes to the BJP that it can now court the Southern party for issue-based support in Parliament. Since the DMK does not want to be seen sitting near to the Congress, it has already requested a different seating arrangement in the House from the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Additionally, the party abstained from last month’s INDIA bloc meeting in Delhi.The BJP will benefit from all of this. According to sources, the ruling party intends to resubmit the modified Delimita-

tion Bill during the Monsoon Session in an effort to win over DMK MPs.According to sources, the administration may introduce the new bill with guarantees of a consistent 50% increase in Lok Sabha seats throughout all states. During the discussion, the opposition insisted on including the 50% cap in the bill’s wording.

The Sharad Pawar-led NCP, another ally of the INDIA alliance, has also indicated that it would back the bill if the 50% restriction is included. “Give the 50 percent seats increase condition on paper, then we will discuss,” Supriya Sule stated on Wednesday.

India received the MH-60R Seahawk, and two more are under route



New Delhi, July 17: The delivery of an additional MH-60R Seahawk naval helicopter to the Indian Navy has significantly strengthened the defense cooperation between the United States and India. The advanced platform would improve marine security in the Indo-Pacific, according to US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, who called it “excellent news” for the US-India cooperation.The US embassy in India announced on Friday that two additional helicopters are anticipated to arrive this week after the MH-60R Seahawk was delivered to the Indian Navy in Kochi last week.Gor shared the news on X, writing, “Great news for our expanding defense partnership between the United States and India! It’s wonderful to see this

cutting-edge capacity bolstering maritime security and our common goal of an open and free Indo-Pacific. The US Embassy in India confirmed the delivery of another MH-60R Seahawk helicopter to the Indian Navy, part of a deal to acquire 24 helicopters signed in 2020. The Indian Navy officially inducted these helicopters in March 2024 at INS Garuda, Kochi. In December 2025, a sustainment package worth approximately ₹7,995 crore (USD 946 million) was approved to enhance maintenance and operational availability. The MH-60R, regarded as a “very potent” platform, has already proven effective during Operation Sindoor. This multi-role helicopter conducts anti-submarine warfare, maritime surveillance, and other critical naval operations, significantly boosting the Indian Navy’s capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region. It features advanced systems for various missions, solidifying its role as a versatile asset for both combat and humanitarian efforts.

Anurag Kumar, a former head of a spy agency, has been appointed as Delhi’s new police commissioner



New Delhi, July 17: The government announced on Friday that Anurag Kumar, a former special director of the Intelligence Bureau, has been appointed as the new commissioner of Delhi Police. Satish Golcha, an IPS officer from the 1992 batch, took over as chief of police for Delhi in August of last year. Kumar, an IPS officer from the 1994 batch, took his position.On Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra

Modi’s cabinet’s Appointments Committee returned Kumar from the Bureau to his parent cadre, AGMUT. Anurag Kumar, IPS (AGMUT:1994), is now appointed as Commissioner of Police, Delhi with effect from the date of assumption of charge and till further orders, with approval from the Competent Authority, according to an official order. Golcha, who served till April 2027, is now required to report to

the lieutenant governor of Delhi.With almost 32 years of expertise in both administration and law enforcement, Anurag Kumar has worked as a special director in the nation’s top intelligence organization, the Intelligence Bureau. He oversaw crucial duties pertaining to intelligence analysis, national security, counterterrorism tactics, and delicate security issues during his lengthy service at the IB.Kumar, who has

a bachelor’s degree in engineering, received the Police Medal for Meritorious Service in 2010 and the President’s Police Medal for Distinguished Service in 2016. Officers who have made outstanding achievements to the police force are given these honors. As he assumes leadership of the Delhi Police, Anurag Kumar will now confront a number of significant obstacles.His top responsibilities will include upholding law and order in the nation’s capital, reducing organized crime, combating cybercrime, bolstering women’s safety, improving counterterrorism readiness, and guaranteeing VIP security.Given that the city is home to the Parliament, Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Supreme Court, foreign embassies, several sensitive government institutions, and historical landmarks, the Delhi Police is one of the most significant police forces in the nation.

Even if the victim’s body is never found, the accused can still be found guilty of murder: SC

New Delhi, July 17: A missing murder is not the same as a missing body. The Supreme Court ruled that an accused person can be found guilty of murder even if the victim’s body is never found. The court warned that any such requirement would enable murderers who successfully dispose of a body to evade justice and stated that the law requires proof that a crime was committed, not the production of the corpse.A bench of justices Sanjay Karol and Prasanna B. Varale rendered the decision,

upholding the life sentence of an Assamese man found guilty of killing a 10-year-old adopted child whose body was purportedly dumped into a river and was never found. The court upheld the concurrent findings of the trial court and the Gauhati high court, ruling that the prosecution had established the offence through credible evidence despite the absence of the body.“A person can be convicted of murdering another even if the latter’s body has not been recovered,” held the bench in its judgment

released on Wednesday, clarifying that “corpus delicti means that the offence has been committed and not that the dead body of the murdered person has been recovered.” The ruling came in an appeal filed by Debojit Pankika of Assam, who challenged his conviction under Sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) of the Indian Penal Code in the 2015 case. The prosecution case was that the deceased child, who had been living with the appellant and his mother – the

girl’s aunt, after being adopted, disappeared after the mother left home for medical treatment, leaving the child in the appellant’s exclusive care. The prosecution primarily relied on the testimony of a witness who claimed that the appellant had admitted that the child caught fire after being accused of stealing ₹40 and had then coerced him into assisting in the transportation of the body, covered in a sack, to the Teok River for disposal at knifepoint. The body was not recovered from the river

by the investigating agency despite numerous attempts. Rejecting the argument that the absence of a body undermined the prosecution, the Supreme Court asserted that the case fell under the “corpus delicti” principle, which requires proof of death and that it resulted from a criminal act.

The court noted that while one component might be direct, the other could rely on circumstantial evidence. It emphasized that demanding a body for conviction could enable offenders to evade

justice. The reliability of a key witness, despite prior hostility allegations, was affirmed due to consistent testimony about being threatened and forced to transport the child’s body.

The appellant’s failure to explain the child’s 22-day disappearance added to the incrimination, as his inaction was deemed inconsistent with typical human response. The Supreme Court upheld the life sentence for murder and a seven-year sentence for evidence disappearance, dismissing the appeal.

The Uttarakhand Road Project is threatening 3,000 trees, and activists are fighting back

Dehradun, July 17:This year, protests have clouded Uttarakhand’s annual Harela festival, which honors trees and nature.

Environmentalists are opposing the cutting down of over 3,000 trees for a road extension project during a week when the state should be hosting tree planting campaigns.Instead, “Black Harela” is being observed.Fallen trees are strewn along the area close to “Saat Mod” as workmen continue to chop down additional trees to create room for the project.The region is already ecologically fragile, according to environmentalists. They claim that extensive falling will negatively impact the local wildlife diversity and microclimate in addition to decreasing green cover. The festival was dubbed “Black Harela” on Thursday by scores of demonstrators wearing black clothing in protest of the devastation of



green cover.Does the government intend to transform this area into a concrete jungle or a desert? At a demonstration on Thursday, an environmental activist stated, “Even the person operating the saw rests in the shade of these very trees when tired.”The tree-cutting is allegedly being done “without adequate ecological assessment,” according to protesters. They emphasize that each project has an Environment Assessment Plan to make up

for any harm done to the environment during construction. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is executing the Bhaniyawala-Jollygrant-Rishikesh Four/Six Lane Project, emphasizing strict adherence to recommended mitigation measures, especially concerning elephant corridors. The 20-kilometer project, costing Rs 743 crore under the Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM), aims to enhance connectivity among

Dehradun, Jollygrant Airport, and Rishikesh, while improving infrastructure for tourism and transport. Key engineering modifications have been implemented to minimize environmental impact, including reducing the Right of Way in forest areas from 60 meters to 23 meters to lessen tree felling while maintaining safety standards. In a scientific assessment by the Forest Research Institute, 754 trees suitable for transplantation will be moved during the monsoon season. The Forest Department recorded 29 wildlife deaths from road accidents over the past five years on the two-lane road in the Rishikesh and Barkot forest ranges.

To enhance wildlife safety, special elephant underpasses, including a 3.5 km elevated structure, are being constructed on the proposed highway to facilitate safer elephant passage and reduce wildlife accidents.

An iron rod falls on a Congress worker at Rahul Gandhi’s Dehradun event, killing him



Dehradun, July 17:An iron rod from a tent set up for Rahul Gandhi’s planned event fell on a 65-year-old Congress worker at the Bannu School grounds in

Dehradun on Thursday night, killing him, according to a party leader.Congress state vice-president Suryakant Dhasmana confirmed the event, stating

that Amar Mehta, the victim, was overseeing preparations under the tent when an iron rod from the makeshift building unexpectedly collapsed, seriously injuring his head.According to Dhasmana, Mehta was taken to a hospital, where medical professionals pronounced him dead.On Friday, Congressman Gandhi is expected to attend the “Chhatron ki Goonj” (Voice of kids) event at the Bannu School grounds. There, he will speak with kids on a variety of topics, including question paper leaks.

Sonam Wangchuk won’t give up quickly



New Delhi, July 17: Even as the protest entered its 20th day, activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is on an indefinite hunger strike in Delhi, declared that he will “stay alive till July 20 at any cost” despite physicians warning that his protracted fast had reached a critical stage.The 59-year-old Wangchuk has called for a large turnout for the Cockroach Janta Party’s (CJP) planned march to parliament on July 20, the start of the Monsoon Session, and is calling for the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan due to the suspected NEET paper leak. “On the exterior, I appear feeble, but on the inside, I am strong. You are all undoubtedly strong on the inside as much as the outside. For our nonviolent march to Parliament on July 20, we will need this enthusiasm. Speaking to followers, he declared, “We will go together and present our plea in the temple of democracy.”I shall do everything in my power to survive till July 20. “If you don’t show up and July 20 doesn’t work out, I’ll return as a ghost,” he jokingly remarked, eliciting applause from the audience.

Due to the extended fast, Wangchuk’s physicians had cautioned on Thursday that his condition had reached a dangerous level. Wangchuk has been losing muscle and fat, which is causing weight loss, according to Satish Lamba, a physician who has been seeing Wangchuk on a regular basis. He claimed to have shed nine kilograms.Wangchuk has been living just on water for 20 days, and the doctor emphasized that this may be fatal.The doctor cautioned that his body was probably devouring muscles and that his organs might be the next.Wangchuk, however, has declined to lift the fast, claiming that doing so would send the incorrect message if the government did not respond. He insisted that the goal should now be to ensure the success of the parliament march on July 20. The Delhi High Court has also taken up the matter, ordering authorities to keep an eye on Wangchuk’s health every day and offer medical support should his condition worsen.Wangchuk joined the movement on June 28 and has been on an indefinite hunger strike since the CJP protest started on June 20.

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A 40-Year Dispute: The Case for Renewed Falklands Dialogue

The long-running dispute between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands, known as the Malvinas in Argentina, remains one of the most enduring territorial disagreements of the modern era. More than four decades after the 1982 Falklands War, the issue continues to shape relations between London and Buenos Aires, despite changing global realities and repeated calls for dialogue. The recent appearance of a “Las Malvinas son Argentinas” banner during a football match has once again brought the dispute into public attention, raising questions about whether the two countries can eventually move beyond historical grievances and seek a negotiated settlement.

The Falklands issue is deeply connected to questions of sovereignty, identity and national pride. For Britain, the islands are a self-governing overseas territory whose residents have repeatedly expressed a desire to remain under British administration. For Argentina, the islands represent a historical claim and a symbol of unresolved territorial loss. Both positions have strong emotional and political foundations, making compromise extremely difficult.

However, supporters of renewed dialogue argue that the dispute should not remain permanently frozen because of the events of 1982. Before the war, British and Argentine governments were already exploring possible arrangements regarding the islands’ future. Diplomatic efforts during the 1970s focused on improving relations between the Falklands and mainland Argentina, including agreements that allowed easier travel, trade and access to essential services.

During this period, some British officials considered possible sovereignty arrangements that could provide Argentina with formal recognition while protecting the islanders’ interests through guarantees of autonomy and security. These discussions reflected a broader international trend during the late 20th century, when former colonial powers were negotiating the future of overseas territories.

The 1982 Argentine invasion dramatically changed the course of those negotiations. The military government’s decision to seize the islands was widely condemned and led to a conflict in which hundreds of lives were lost. Britain’s military victory strengthened the political importance of the Falklands within the United Kingdom, making any future discussion of sovereignty far more difficult.

Since the war, successive British governments have maintained that the islanders’ wishes must remain the central factor

in determining the territory’s future. A 2013 referendum among Falkland Islanders showed overwhelming support for maintaining their current status as a British overseas territory. Britain has argued that this democratic choice settles the matter.

Argentina, however, has continued to reject that position, insisting that sovereignty discussions must resume. Buenos Aires argues that the islands are geographically part of the South Atlantic region and that the dispute represents unfinished business from the colonial era. The disagreement has remained a persistent source of tension between the two nations.

The challenge is finding a way to balance the rights and security of the islanders with the broader geopolitical realities of the region. Critics of the current approach argue that maintaining a heavily protected British military presence thousands of miles away is expensive and unsustainable in the long term. They suggest that diplomacy, rather than permanent confrontation, should eventually guide the relationship between the Falklands and Argentina.

Any future negotiations would need to guarantee the safety, political rights and economic interests of the island population. The experience of other disputed territories shows that compromise is possible when communities are given meaningful protections and when agreements are built on mutual trust rather than pressure.

The dispute also reflects a broader question about the legacy of empire in the modern world. Many former colonial territories have undergone political transitions, while others remain linked to distant powers. The future of such territories often involves difficult conversations about history, identity and self-determination.

For now, the Falklands remain under British administration, and there is little political appetite in London for reopening sovereignty talks. However, history suggests that unresolved disputes rarely disappear completely. Future generations may view the issue differently, particularly as global priorities shift and diplomatic solutions become more attractive than prolonged confrontation.

The Falklands question is unlikely to be solved through gestures, slogans or political statements. It will require patience, respect and a willingness to acknowledge the concerns of all sides. While the wounds of 1982 remain significant, a lasting solution can only emerge through dialogue rather than continued silence. The challenge for Britain and Argentina is not forgetting the past, but finding a way to prevent it from permanently defining the future.

After Ann Widdecombe: Britain’s Political Culture Faces a Test of Civility, Debate and Democracy

Ann Widdecombe’s death has reopened a difficult and increasingly urgent conversation about the state of political culture in Britain: how disagreements are expressed, how public figures are treated, and whether a democracy can survive when political opponents are viewed not as fellow citizens with different ideas but as enemies to be defeated at any cost. Widdecombe, a former Conservative minister, author and broadcaster known for her outspoken views and combative style, spent decades as one of the most recognisable figures in British public life. Her career was marked by strong opinions, fierce debates and frequent controversy, but also by a willingness to engage directly with opponents and accept the outcomes of democratic processes.

Her passing has prompted reflections not only on her individual legacy but also on a wider shift in the relationship between politicians and the public. Britain has long been a country where political arguments can be intense, sometimes deeply personal, but there has traditionally been an understanding that disagreement should ultimately be resolved through elections, parliamentary debate and public discussion rather than intimidation or violence. The concern now is that this basic democratic principle is being weakened by a political environment increasingly shaped by anger, online hostility and the tendency to reduce individuals into symbols of everything their critics dislike.

Widdecombe belonged to a generation of politicians who operated in a very different environment. During much of her career, public figures faced criticism, satire and media scrutiny, but the scale and speed of online communication had not yet

transformed political debate. Social media has created new opportunities for participation and accountability, but it has also created spaces where extreme language, misinformation and personal attacks can spread rapidly. The result is a political atmosphere where public figures are often judged not as complex individuals but as representatives of causes, movements or ideologies.

The danger of such a culture is that it can make hostility appear acceptable. When politicians are constantly described in terms that deny their humanity, the boundaries between criticism and hatred become blurred. Democratic debate depends on recognising that opponents are still people, even when their views are strongly rejected. Without that recognition, political disagreement can become a justification for cruelty.

The deaths of other British politicians in recent years have already forced the country to confront these issues. The murder of Labour MP Jo Cox in 2016 shocked the nation and led to widespread reflection across political parties about the tone of public debate. Cox’s death was followed by renewed calls for greater respect between political opponents and for a reduction in the increasingly aggressive language used in public life. Similarly, the killing of Conservative MP Sir David Amess in 2021 raised concerns about the safety of elected representatives and the risks faced by those who engage directly with the public.

These incidents highlighted an uncomfortable reality: politicians are both powerful public figures and ordinary individuals. They make decisions that affect millions of lives, and they must be open to criticism and accountability. At the same time, criticism

cannot become a justification for threats, harassment or violence. A healthy democracy requires both accountability and basic respect.

The ebate surrounding political security has become more complicated as threats increase. One response has been to call for greater protection for politicians, including increased security arrangements and measures to reduce risks. Such steps are understandable when individuals face genuine threats. However, there are limits to how far security measures can address a deeper cultural problem. Democracy depends on representatives remaining connected to the people they serve. If fear forces politicians behind increasingly higher barriers, the relationship between citizens and elected officials could become more distant.

The challenge is therefore not only about protection but also about political culture. Britain must consider what kind of public debate it wants to encourage. Strong disagreement is not a problem in itself; in fact, it is essential to democracy. The problem arises when disagreement turns into hatred and when opponents are treated as threats rather than participants in the same democratic system.

Widdecombe’s own political career reflected the complexity of public life. She was admired by supporters for her clarity, independence and willingness to defend unpopular positions. Critics strongly disagreed with many of her views, particularly on issues including abortion, European integration, LGBTQ+ rights and social change. Her positions often placed her at the centre of national debates and made her a frequent target of criticism.

Yet those who worked with her and covered her career

have also described qualities that complicated the public image of her as a purely ideological figure. She was known for directness, humour and a willingness to argue openly. Like many politicians, she contained contradictions: she could be both uncompromising and approachable, determined and vulnerable, traditional in some beliefs while supporting reform in others.

That complexity is important because modern political discussion often removes complexity from public figures. Politicians are frequently transformed into simplified characters: heroes to their supporters and villains to their opponents. This approach may make political communication easier, but it weakens understanding. Real people rarely fit completely into political categories.

Widdecombe’s religious beliefs were central to her worldview and influenced many of her political positions. Her Catholic faith shaped her views on social issues and contributed to some of the controversies surrounding her career. Supporters saw her as a politician guided by principle, while critics argued that some of her positions conflicted with changing social attitudes. As society evolved on issues such as LGBTQ+ rights and family structures, Widdecombe remained committed to many traditional positions, making her an increasingly distinctive figure in British politics.

However, democracy does not require everyone to agree with changing social values. It requires that disagreements can be expressed peacefully and that political decisions are ultimately determined through democratic institutions. The ability to coexist with people whose beliefs differ from our own is one of the central tests of a free

society.

The reaction to Widdecombe’s death has also highlighted the impact of online communication on political attitudes. Social media platforms have created environments where people can express views instantly and often anonymously. While many users engage thoughtfully, some online spaces encourage extreme reactions and reward outrage. The result is a debate culture where shocking statements can receive more attention than balanced arguments.

This raises difficult questions about responsibility. Governments, technology companies, political parties and individuals all have roles in shaping public discourse. Regulating harmful content presents challenges because free expression is a fundamental democratic value. However, protecting free speech does not mean accepting unlimited hostility or the deliberate encouragement of threats.

Political leaders also carry responsibility. The language used by politicians can influence public attitudes. Strong criticism is part of political competition, but repeated attempts to portray opponents as illegitimate or dangerous can damage trust in democratic institutions. Leaders across the political spectrum have a duty to challenge violence and reject language that encourages hatred.

At the same time, citizens also play an important role. A healthier political culture requires people to recognise that disagreement is not the same as hostility. It is possible to strongly oppose someone’s policies while acknowledging their humanity. This distinction is essential for maintaining a functioning democracy.

Ann Widdecombe’s career represented an era when political arguments were of-

ten passionate but remained connected to personal interaction. She was a figure who could provoke disagreement while still participating in the same democratic conversation as those who opposed her. Her legacy, therefore, is not only about the positions she defended but also about the importance of maintaining a political culture where debate remains possible.

The question facing Britain is not whether political disagreement should become less intense. Democracy requires argument, criticism and competing visions for the future. The real question is whether those disagreements can exist within a framework of respect and shared commitment to democratic principles.

As political divisions deepen around issues such as identity, immigration, social change and economic policy, the need for responsible debate becomes even more important. A society that loses the ability to see opponents as fellow citizens risks damaging the very institutions that allow disagreement to exist.

Widdecombe’s death serves as a reminder that behind every political position is a person. Politicians can be criticised, challenged and held accountable, but they should not be reduced to symbols of hatred. The future health of British democracy will depend not on eliminating disagreement but on ensuring that disagreement remains human.

The measure of a civilised political culture is not the absence of conflict. It is the ability to manage conflict without losing respect for the people involved. Britain’s challenge is to preserve that balance — allowing fierce debate while rejecting the idea that political opponents are enemies who must be destroyed.

The World Cup Lesson: Britain Needs More Spaces Where Strangers Come Together

The FIFA World Cup has always been about more than football.

While the tournament’s biggest moments are usually remembered through goals, trophies and individual performances, some of the most powerful memories are created away from the stadiums — in streets, parks, public squares and neighbourhoods where strangers come together to share the emotional highs and lows of the game. As the 2026 World Cup approaches its conclusion, one of the most striking lessons from the tournament has been the importance of collective viewing experiences and how public spaces can become places of connection, celebration and community.

For many fans, the most memorable moments do not necessarily come from watching their national team inside a stadium or from the comfort of their homes. They come from being surrounded by others — singing, celebrating, arguing over refereeing decisions and sharing the unpredictable drama that makes football unique. The experience of watching Colombia’s match against Switzerland in London’s Elephant and Castle demonstrated how powerful these informal gatherings can be and how they might offer lessons for cities seeking to rebuild community life.

The area, sometimes known as “Little Bogotá” because of its large Colombian community, transformed into a vibrant unofficial fan zone during the match. Streets and pavements filled with supporters wearing yellow shirts, waving flags and gathering outside cafés and restaurants. Businesses benefited from the crowds, while neighbours and visitors came together in

a shared celebration that extended far beyond the football itself.

The scene was not a carefully planned event with expensive infrastructure or elaborate organisation. It was a spontaneous gathering built around enthusiasm, community spirit and a shared interest. People watched the match on small television screens placed in shop windows and on mobile phones held up among crowds. In one memorable example, a phone balanced on top of a mop became an improvised viewing platform for a group of fans gathered around it.

The simplicity of the moment was part of its charm. During breaks in play, music replaced commentary, and supporters danced to Colombian rhythms. Children played nearby, older generations socialised, and strangers who might otherwise never have spoken found themselves connected through a common experience. The football match provided the reason to gather, but the human interaction was the real attraction.

Such scenes highlight an important truth about sport: the value of football is not only in the competition itself but in the relationships and experiences created around it. Watching a dramatic match alone at home can never fully replicate the atmosphere of sharing the moment with hundreds of other people. The excitement, frustration and celebration become collective emotions rather than individual reactions.

This raises a broader question about public life in Britain. Could more outdoor screens and organised fan zones help create stronger communities beyond major sport-

ing events? For political leaders and local authorities looking for ways to encourage social connection, public viewing spaces could offer a practical and relatively simple solution.

Andy Burnham’s administration in Greater Manchester, like many local governments across the country, has spoken frequently about strengthening communities and improving public spaces. Large-scale fan zones and outdoor events could become one way of turning those ambitions into reality. Rather than treating community as an abstract idea, cities could create environments where people naturally interact.

Public spaces often succeed when they invite people to stay, participate and share experiences. Parks, town squares and pedestrian areas can become lively meeting points when there is a reason for people to gather. A major football tournament provides an obvious opportunity, but the concept could extend far beyond sport.

Recent examples show that outdoor screenings can attract large audiences when they are accessible and well organised. During major tournaments, cities such as Brighton and Leeds have created fan zones featuring large screens capable of hosting thousands of supporters. These events demonstrated that people are willing to gather in public spaces when the environment feels welcoming and inclusive.

However, the potential of outdoor community events extends beyond football. Large public screenings could be used for cultural moments, entertainment programmes and national occasions. Wimble-

don matches, major television finales, concerts, documentaries and important public broadcasts could all become shared experiences.

Imagine major cultural events being shown in parks and city centres, allowing communities to experience them together. A popular television finale projected on a large screen in a public square could create the same kind of atmosphere as a football match. Such events could encourage people to spend time in local areas, support nearby businesses and rediscover public spaces as places of social interaction.

Privately managed public spaces have already begun experimenting with similar ideas. Areas such as Canary Wharf and Coal Drops Yard in London host outdoor screenings of films and sporting events, creating attractive environments where people can gather without paying admission fees. These initiatives demonstrate that public entertainment does not always require large stadiums or expensive venues.

Local authorities could potentially build on this model by investing in portable screens, basic infrastructure and event management. The costs could be balanced through partnerships with local businesses, sponsorships and increased spending in surrounding shops, cafés and restaurants. When successful, these events can generate economic benefits while also improving community engagement.

There are, however, challenges. Organising large gatherings requires careful planning, security arrangements and consideration for local residents. Noise, waste management and crowd control must be addressed. Yet the success of many

informal fan zones suggests that communities themselves often have the ability to manage events responsibly when given the opportunity.

One of the strongest arguments in favour of public fan zones is accessibility. Major sporting events can sometimes become expensive experiences. Tickets, travel and food costs can prevent many people from participating. Free outdoor screenings allow wider sections of society to enjoy the atmosphere of major events without financial barriers.

This issue has become particularly relevant as traditional venues struggle to accommodate demand. During major football matches, many pubs and hospitality businesses face overwhelming interest. The demand for places to watch games can exceed available capacity, leading some venues to introduce entry fees or ticketing systems.

While pubs remain central to British sporting culture and deserve support, they cannot realistically accommodate every fan who wants to watch a major match. Public fan zones could provide an additional option rather than a replacement. They could reduce pressure on hospitality venues while allowing pubs to benefit from smaller groups seeking food and drinks before or after events.

The challenge facing Britain’s public spaces is not simply a lack of facilities but sometimes a lack of confidence in allowing people to use them. Many parks and squares are managed with restrictions designed to prevent problems, but excessive caution can also prevent positive community activity. Public spaces are valuable precisely because they belong to everyone.

Changed jobs before 10 years EPS money under

New Delhi: The Employees’ Pension Scheme (EPS), 2026, which came into effect on June 29, has introduced a key change for EPF members who leave their jobs before completing 10 years of eligible service. While the eligibility criteria for a monthly pension remain unchanged, the revised scheme changes when such members can claim the withdrawal benefit and continues to offer an option to preserve their pensionable service. Employees enrolled under the Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF) become eligible for a monthly pension under the Employees’ Pension Scheme (EPS), 2026 after completing at least 10 years of eligible service. Members who satisfy this requirement can claim an early pension if they leave employment before attaining the age of superannuation, subject to the conditions laid down under the scheme. However, not every employee remains with EPF-covered establishments long enough to complete the 10-year requirement. Many switch jobs, move overseas, become self-employed or leave the workforce before becoming eligible for a monthly pension. For such members, EPS 2026 lays down the options available after they exit service. Two options for members The Scheme Certificate allows

members to preserve their eligible service under EPS. If they subsequently join another establishment covered under EPF and EPS, the earlier service can be added to the new service period. \This enables employees who frequently change jobs to continue building towards the minimum 10 years of service required for a monthly pension.New rule delays withdrawal benefitOne of the most significant changes under EPS 2026 relates to the timing of the withdrawal benefit.Unlike the earlier scheme, where eligible members could seek the withdrawal benefit after exiting service, the revised rules require members to wait before making the claim. According to the scheme, a member exiting service before attaining the age of superannuation becomes eligible to receive the withdrawal benefit only after the expiry of 36 months from the date on which the last contribution became due, or on attaining the age of superannuation, whichever is earlier.Under the new scheme, a member who leaves employment before completing 10 years of eligible service and has not attained the age of superannuation has two choices. The member can either claim a withdrawal benefit or obtain a Scheme Certificate.

Wipro share: Q1 deal bookings fall, organic revenue growth guidance

New Delhi: Wipro’s June quarter results disappointed analysts, who said the IT major continued to face top line headwinds. They highlighted weak Q2 revenue guidance of minus 1.5 per cent to 0.5 per cent sequentially in constant currency (CC) terms and noted that June-quarter deal wins also came in below estimates. The targets on the stock post Q1 results suggests limited upside potential. On Friday, Wipro shares fell 2.67 per cent to hit a low of Rs 173.05 apiece on BSE. Wipro’s growth engine remains challenged, well-below the peer average, with no near-term respite or acceleration visible, said HDFC Institutional Equities, as it cut its earnings estimates by 5 per cent and lowered its target multiple to 14 times to arrive at a target of Rs 195.the current valuation, Choice said the risk-reward remains unfavourable for Wipro, as it cut its target to Rs 170 from Rs 185. Wipro shares



fell 1.6 per cent to Rs 174.95 apiece. “Weak performance of BFSI, Consumer and Energy may continue in FY27, straining revenue growth. We now build in 1 per cent dollar revenue decline for both FY27/FY28 compared with flat growth factored in earlier. Margins may be strained due to weak revenues as well as in-

crease in costs,” said Elara Securities. This brokerage pared its target for Wipro to Rs 160 from Rs 180 earlier.ICICI Securities said the Q2 guidance implied 1.3 per cent organic growth at the midpoint, as per its estimate, for Q2FY27, implying a decline as the management factored in continued macro

uncertainty and geopolitical instability. “Deal bookings also declined on a YoY basis as some deal closures slipped to Q2. IT services margin was 16 per cent, down 100 bps QoQ, led by headwinds from annual salary increases, the ramp-up of large deals, and ongoing AI-related investments. Wipro’s revenue growth has been lagging large-cap IT peers, suggesting weak execution,” ICICI Securities said as it suggested ‘Reduce’ and a target of Rs 153 on the stock. Axis Securities said unfavourable macro conditions, increasing competitive intensity and higher AI-led investments, may lead to uneven profitability in the coming quarters. “Therefore, we maintain our HOLD rating on the stock, valuing the company at 13 times March 2028E EPS, with a target price of Rs 190/share, implying an upside of 7 per cent from the CMP,” it said.

Alpine Texworld IPO allotment date: Check your application status, latest GMP & more

New Delhi: Alpine Texworld is likely to finalize the basis of allotment of its shares on Friday, July 17. Applicant bidders will get the messages, alerts or emails for debit of their funds either on weekend or latest by Monday, July 20. The fabric and textile player recieved a muted response from the investors during the three day bidding period. The IPO of Alpine Texworld was open for bidding between July 14-16. It had offered its shares in the price band of Rs 100-105 per share with a lot size of 142 shares. The company eyed to raise a total of Rs 126 crore via IPO, which was entirely a fresh share sale of up to 1,20,24,000 equity shares.The issue was overall subscribed only 1.40 times with less than 77,000 applications, fetching bids for just above Rs 177 crore. The portion for retail bidders was subscribed 1.54 times. The quotas for non-institutional investors (NIIIs) and qualified-institutional bidders (QIBs) were subscribed 1.09 times each. market premium (GMP) of Alpine Texworld has seen



a sharp fall led by a weak bidding and mixed market sentiments. Last heard, it was commanding a premium of Rs 1-2 per share, suggesting a flat listing for the investors. Its GMP stood around Rs 5-8 apiece, during the bidding period. Incorporated in February 2016, Ahmedabad-based Alpine Texworld is engaged in dyeing and processing fabrics, focusing

on producing high-quality textiles. It has two manufacturing units. The manufacturing facilities are well-equipped for specialized dyeing and finishing, offering a diversified range of products to garment manufacturers and traders.D&A Financial Services is the sole book running lead manager for the Alpine Texworld and Kfin Technologies is

the registrar of the issue. Refund shall be initiated on Monday, July 20. Shares of the company shall be listed on both BSE and NSE on July 20. Shares of the company shall be listed on both BSE and NSE on Tuesday, July 21.

Investors, who had bid for the issue of Alpine Texworld, can check the allotment status on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) website: Investors can also check the allotment status on the online portal of KFin Technologies Limited (<https://k cosmic.kfintech.com/ipostatus>), the registrar to the issue.The registrar is a Sebi-registered entity, qualified to act as such and which electronically processes all applications and carries out the allotment process, as per the prospectus. The registrar is responsible for complying with the timelines for updating the electronic credit of shares to successful applicants, dispatching and uploading refunds, and attending to all investor-related queries.

Stocks account for 28% of India’s market cap



New Delhi: Jefferies, in its latest GREED & Fear note, said the top 20 Indian stocks now account for just 28 per cent of the country’s total market capitalisation (m-cap), the lowest since 2020. This stands in sharp contrast to global markets, where the top 20 stocks have steadily increased their share of world market capitalisation amid concentrated AI-driven bets. Jefferies said smallcap and midcap stocks are outperforming largecaps in India. This feature of the Indian market is the opposite of the trend globally where market action has concentrated around stocks geared to AI, or at least perceived to be geared to it, the foreign brokerage said on July 16. Midcaps have also been supported by continuing inflows into domestic equity mutual funds though they slowed in the last two months. Meanwhile, Jefferies said India as a stock market has remained the inverse AI trade, while there has been a further negative in recent months in terms of the country’s dependence on imported energy in the context of the continuing negative ramifications from the US-Israel attack on Iran.In absolute-return terms India as a market has been less disastrous, most particularly from the standpoint of domestic investors in rupee terms, it said

“If this is an interesting development, the message of the report is that it has become time on a tactical basis for some mean reversion,” Jefferies said. Jefferies said earnings growth for largecap indices Nifty 50 and Nifty 100 is forecast to rise to an annualised 14-15 per cent in the next two fiscal years compared with an annualised 8 per cent in the last two fiscal years ended March 31, 2026. Midcaps are projected to maintain an annualised 20 per cent earnings growth for the next two years compared with 18 per cent in the last two fiscal years. As for the valuations, the Nifty 100 large cap index’s one-year forward PE is currently at a 33 per cent discount to the Nifty MidCap 150 index’s forward PE, much higher than the 10-year average discount of 20 per cent.Jefferies said the massive outperformance of small and midcaps are seen at a time when the large caps have lacked obvious compelling thematics. It said Nifty MidCap 100 Index has risen 99 per cent since the start of 2023 while the Nifty Index is up “only” 33 per cent over the same period. Jefferies’ head of India research Mahesh Nandurkar on July 9 d the outperformance of small and midcaps in India has been fundamentally driven in the sense that it reflects superior EPS growth.

RIL shares jump, add Rs 37,000 crore in m-cap: Q1

New Delhi: Ahead of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)’s June quarter results due later in the day, the most-valued stock on Dalal Street advanced 2.38 per cent to hit a high of Rs 1,323.80 apiece, adding Rs 37,000 crore to its market capitalistaion. RIL commanded an m-cap of R 17,86,836.41 crore intraday compared with Rs 17,49,757.26 crore in the previous session. Brokers largely expected the Mukesh Ambani-led oil-to-telecom major to report single-digit profit growth, with strength in the oil-to-chemicals (O2C), Retail and Jio businesses partly offsetting weakness in the upstream segment.

Antique Stock Broking expects RIL to report 8.3 per cent year-on-year (YoY) rise in net profit at Rs 19,566 crore on 34.7 per cent YoY jump in sales Rs 3,34,908 crore. RIL’s Ebitda is seen rising 12 per cent YoY or 8.9 per cent quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) to Rs 48,100 crore, supported by growth across all major segments except upstream. Segment-wise Q1 expectations

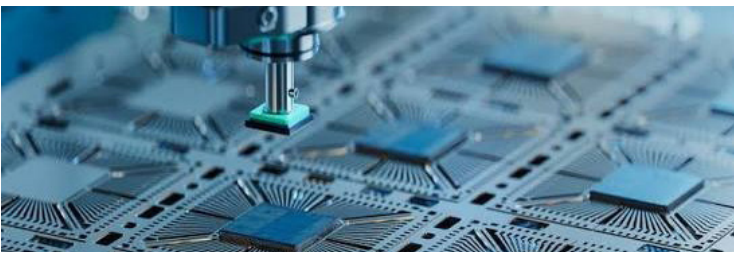
Nomura estimated steady 80 lakh subscriber addition for Jio Platforms, which may take total subscribers to 53.2 crore in Q1. It sees a modestly higher ARPU of Rs 217 per month against Rs 214 per month in Q4. Growth for Reliance Retail is likely improved slightly in Q1, with retail revenue pegged at Rs 94,100 crore (up 12 per cent YoY) and Ebitda at Rs 6600 crore (up 3 per cent YoY), the foreign brokerage said. “We estimate O2C Ebitda at R 15,000 crore for Q1, up 3 per cent QoQ. The refinery turnaround may more than offset strong refining margins, and higher petchem prices. 1QFY27 O2C business continued to be impacted by increased refinery LPG output according to government guidance, fuel retailing loss, and K-G gas being diverted to other sectors,” Nomura said.Antique said Retail Ebitda may grow 7 per cent YoY. Upstream is expected to be the only weak segment, with Ebitda declining due to lower KG-D6 gas production volumes, it said. “O2C EBITDA is expected to rise 25 per cent QoQ, driven by stronger GRMs and improved petrochemical spreads. Jio Ebitda is likely to increase 2.4 per cent QoQ, supported by subscriber additions of 70 lakh and a marginal improvement in ARPU to Rs 215 (vs Rs 214 in 4QFY26),” Antique said.

India’s ISM 2.0 cuts chip subsidies, bets on building a deeper ecosystem

New Delhi: For decades, India’s semiconductor ambitions were seen as more aspirational than achievable. High capital costs, technological complexity and the lack of a domestic manufacturing ecosystem kept the country on the sidelines as East Asia, the US and Europe built their chip industries.That perception began to change after the government made semiconductor manufacturing a strategic priority and launched the India Semiconductor Mission in December 2021. Nearly five years later, India has secured commitments for its first commercial semiconductor fab and several assembly, testing, marking and packaging, or ATPM, and outsourced semiconductor assembly and test, or OSAT, facilities. The government is now seeking to

build on that momentum through ISM 2.0, approved by the Cabinet with an outlay of Rs 1.27 lakh crore, almost twice the allocation under the first phase. But the new programme also marks a significant shift in how government support will be deployed.Building momentum

When India entered the global semiconductor race in 2021, it offered a flat 50% fiscal support package to overcome investor concerns aboutsetting up manufacturing in a country without an established chip ecosystem.The approach helped attract Micon Technology, which established a semiconductor assembly and testing facility in the country. The project was followed by other proposals involving global technology partners. Tata Elec-



tronics’ commercial silicon fab has Taiwan’s PSMC as its technology partner, while CG Power’s packaging facility is being developed with support from Japan’s Renesas Electronics.In all, 12 projects were approved under ISM 1.0. Industry watchers see this as a meaningful start, particularly given India’s previous failed attempts to attract large semiconductor manufacturing projects.After the chip crunch earlier

this decade, many countries without a semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem aspired to get it and especially a high-volume silicon fab, perhaps only India succeeded. In that sense, ISM1.0 is a success. The fact that about 9 OSATs were approved is a success as well as a weakness at the same time as the program looks more OSAT-heavy,” said Arun Mampazhy, an independent semiconductor analyst.

Global CEOs are lining up cheques for India

New Delhi: Even as the world is grappling with trade and energy crises, India has witnessed fresh investments from global companies. Global CEOs lined up cheques for India – a sum of \$94.95 billion in the past five months. Here are some of the biggest commitments announced by global CEOs and companies: Google announced a five-year plan to invest \$15 billion in AI infrastructure in India on February 18. The investment will focus on subsea connectivity, data centres, cloud capacity, and AI skill development.On March 9, ABB revealed a \$75 million investment to expand its manufacturing and research and development capabilities in critical industrial sectors in India. Australia’s AirTrunk declared on June 5 its intention to invest \$30 billion in India to build 5 gigawatts of data centre capacity by 2030.The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board committed up to ₹7,000 crore (\$83.7 million) on June 17 with CtrlS Datacenters to enhance India’s digital infrastructure and hyperscale data centre capacity. Amazon CEO Andy Jassy met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 25 and announced plans to increase Amazon’s investment commitment in India to \$48 billion by 2030. This includes new investments in AI and cloud infrastructure.

Tata Sons stake: Shapoorji Pallonji looking at various options to cut its high debt

New Delhi: Recent reports on discussions between the debt-ridden Shapoorji Pallonji Group and Tata Sons, the holding company of the conglomerate with multiple businesses, on monetising the former’s shareholding in the latter could be interesting for a few reasons. Yes, because the group has debt to the extent of ₹60,000 crore. It holds a 18.4% stake in Tata Sons, that is estimated to be worth about ₹3 lakh crore. Going by reports, the plan is to monetise around 7% of the holding. On the face of it yes, given the valuation of these companies. At what price the deal will be struck and whose holding stands diluted is not clear yet. For the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, there are not too many options. A recent report put out by



ICRA on group company, Shapoorji Pallonji And Company Private Limited says, “The company’s liquidity position remains constrained due to the its weak operating cash flows

from its core EPC operations coupled with the high working capital intensity of operations.” That was what they had wanted, going by the management’s public state-

ments. However, this process has had a few hurdles. Now, 66% of Tata Sons is held by Tata Trusts. Two prominent trustees – Venu Srinivasan, Chairman Emeritus, TVS Motor Company and Vijay Singh, former Defence Secretary, have opposed the listing. However, RBI’s revised set of rules for the listing of NBFCs could lead to the listing of Tata Sons. All in all, time is not really on the Shapoorji Pallonji Group’s side. Through a share-swap arrangement. The Shapoorji Pallonji Group will get shares in listed Tata Group companies. In all, there are 16 companies – includes TCS, Titan, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Indian Hotels and Tata Power – making it a mix across businesses.

‘Even Politburo members can be touched’: what the latest purge says about Xi Jinping’s China

Beijing: On Tuesday, China expelled Ma Xingrui, one of the ruling party’s most senior officials, making him the third politburo member to be purged since 2022 as Xi Jinping deepens his years-long anti-corruption campaign.

Ma, a former Communist party secretary for China’s north-western region of Xinjiang, was accused of corruption, abuse of power and trading political favours for sex. The announcement came after Ma was placed under investigation in April for suspected “serious violations of discipline and the law”.

He has not responded to the claims against him and has not been seen since the announcement.

It is notable that Ma is the first civilian official in the elite political body to fall in this latest purge. Zhang Youxia, who was expelled in January, and He Weidong, who was removed in October last year, were both military officials.

“This is the only civilian [within the politburo] that’s been purged,” said Joseph Torigian, an associate professor at Ameri-

can University and a historian of Chinese elite politics. “I certainly haven’t seen something like that since the purge of the Gang of Four.” Torigian was referring to a 1976 incident in which four politburo members were arrested after the death of Mao Zedong. They were later accused of attempting to seize power, marking one of the most significant reshuffles of the top leadership of the Chinese Communist party (CCP) in its history.

“One of the signals [of what] Xi Jinping is hoping to get out of this purge is that even politburo members, no matter who you are, can be touched by this kind of crackdown,” Torigian said. China’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection accused Ma of seeking benefits for others in official appointments, improperly accepting gifts and bribes, helping relatives and associates profit from his position, and presiding over what it described as “family corruption”.

Christopher Nye, a non-resident fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, said the official announcement about Ma contained very



little of the politically charged language that is usually seen, such as “two-faced person”, “inflated political ambition” or “disloyalty”. Yet Ma was still removed from office.

“This suggests that Xi Jinping’s

political tolerance has diminished. In the past, it seemed that you had to be seen as opposing Xi before the leadership would use the judicial system to remove you. Now, even without any obvious signs of political opposi-

tion, corruption allegations alone appear to be enough to justify such severe punishment,” Nye said.

The announcement alleged Ma’s behaviour was “extremely serious” and accused him of

failing to “restrain himself” after the CCP’s 18th National Congress in 2012. Experts said the reference was notable because it explicitly tied Ma’s alleged misconduct to the period when Xi was leader.

“Before that, Xi wasn’t interested. But anything that happened after that can now become grounds for a purge,” Nye said.

Ma, 67, was once one of the country’s most promising political figures, rising through the ranks after establishing himself as an aerospace engineer and technocrat. Once the youngest doctoral supervisor at the Harbin Institute of Technology, he spent more than a decade at the state-owned China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, where he oversaw major satellite launches and led key programmes including China’s crewed spaceflight and lunar exploration projects.

It earned him the nickname “the young marshal of the aerospace industry”. His political career accelerated in 2013, the year Xi Jinping took office. He was transferred to Guangdong, a province

closely associated with the political legacy of Xi’s father, serving as deputy provincial party secretary and later governor of the province.

In 2021, Ma was appointed Communist party secretary of Xinjiang, where Beijing has been accused of arbitrarily detaining more than a million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in “re-education” camps. During his tenure, Ma publicly maintained a hardline stance on security and “counter-terrorism”, demonstrating to Xi that he could manage one of China’s most politically sensitive regions.

Xi’s purge may not end with Ma. Several officials who previously worked under him have also come under scrutiny.

Last year, Zhang Jianhua, a former subordinate from the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence, was investigated and expelled from the Communist party for corruption charges. In March, Guo Yonghang, who worked under Ma during his time in Shenzhen, was also expelled from the party.

Key moments from Trump’s speech claiming declassified documents show US election vulnerabilities

America: President Donald Trump, in a primetime speech Thursday night, alleged vulnerabilities exist in American election systems, despite declassified documents released by his administration largely discussing vulnerabilities that have been known for years and that election officials around the country have tried to address.

Trump said the speech and release of documents are not meant to “weaken confidence” in US elections, though critics say he has done just that. For years, the US president has spread falsehoods about the 2020 election.

In the remarks, he addressed his economic agenda, immigration policies, election integrity, China, and more.

Documents that the Trump administration released on Thursday shed new light on just how voracious Chinese intelligence services have been in collecting information on Americans.

Cyber espionage, or the use of hacking to collect sensitive information, and the use of cyberattacks to disrupt elections are two very different things. The documents show China doing the former, not the latter. The documents show the lengths that Chinese hackers allegedly went to spy on senior US government officials and the 2020 presidential campaign of Joe Biden.

One Chinese hacking group was using techniques to track



the email accounts of Biden campaign staffers, suggesting that “the Chinese operators are mapping out the target network for follow-on approaches, possibly including tasking campaign staffers’ e-mail accounts in the Chinese military’s signals intelligence system for collection,” one declassified intelligence report says. Other reports in the collection of documents note that Chinese government actors have been downloading voter registration information in numerous states. In some cases, the information was already publicly available. But there is no mention of China actively exploiting the data on voters it collected or stole. There is instead intelligence analysis of what China could do with the data. The personal information on Americans taken by one Chinese actor “could, in theory, be lever-

aged to carry out anything from future CNE (computer network exploitation) operations to election influence operations, although the actual motivations for collecting this information is unknown,” one intelligence report said.

The documents paint a picture of Chinese intelligence services that are collecting just about any information they can on hundreds of millions of Americans. That, in the aggregate, is not a new revelation. Between the 2015 hack of the Office of Personnel Management and subsequent hacks of American health care providers and other companies, US intelligence officials have long warned that Chinese spies have a detailed picture of tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of Americans. The claim promoted by the White House tonight that Venezuela experimented with hacking its

own voting machines echoes allegations made by former Venezuelan intelligence chief and convicted drug trafficker Hugo “El Pollo” Carvajal in a letter to President Donald Trump.

Carvajal, a three-star general trusted by former Venezuelan leaders Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, led the country’s military intelligence service and later served in the National Assembly. He eventually broke with Maduro, endorsed opposition leader Juan Guaidó and fled to Spain.

He was arrested there in 2021 and extradited to the United States in 2023.

In his December 2025 letter obtained by CNN via his lawyer, Carvajal alleged, without providing evidence, that voting-technology company Smartmatic “was born as an electoral tool of the Venezue-

lan regime.” Carvajal claimed elections “can be rigged with the software” and that it had been used to do so, but did not specify which elections.

Smartmatic rejected Carvajal’s account, saying it was never owned or controlled by the Venezuelan government and that no evidence showed its technology manipulated US elections.

The company says its technology was used only in Los Angeles County during the 2020 election.

Trump allies have long falsely accused Smartmatic of rigging the 2020 US election. A declassified CIA memo from June said the US intelligence community determined in 2006 that Venezuela and Smartmatic didn’t have the capability “to manipulate the outcome of elections outside Venezuela.” Carvajal pleaded guilty in 2025 to narcoterrorism, drug-trafficking and weapons charges, including conspiring to import cocaine into the United States.

His sentencing has been postponed without a new date — a possible sign he may be cooperating with prosecutors, although no agreement has been confirmed. He could become a witness against Nicolás Maduro, who was captured by US forces and brought to New York to face narcoterrorism, cocaine importation and weapons charges.

Japan relaxes royal succession rules

Japan: The Japanese parliament has approved a bill to relax imperial succession rules, amid concerns over the dwindling size of the imperial family.

The bill, passed by the upper house on Friday, allows the imperial family to adopt distant male relatives over the age of 15 and lets women keep their royal status after marrying outside the family.

But it does not change the law barring women from ascending the throne despite wide public support for a female emperor, meaning Princess Aiko, the only child of the current emperor, is still not eligible to succeed the throne.

The bill cleared the lower house last week, and will move through the final legal procedures before the changes take effect.

Japan has the world’s oldest continuous hereditary monarchy, with a lineage that’s believed to span more than 2,600 years.

Third-in-line, and the last eligible candidate for the throne, is the emperor’s 90-year-old uncle. Without any amendments to the law, the line of succession will end if Prince Hisahito does not have a male child. However, with the new bill, male descendants of 11 former imperial branches could be adopted back into the family. These family branches had been removed following



the Second World War. Female members of the imperial family will also be able to retain their royal status if they marry commoners. They were previously made to give up their titles and leave their families - which is what Princess Mako did in 2021 to marry her college sweetheart.

The bill, the first amendment to the main text of the Imperial House Law since 1949, marks the biggest overhaul to Japan’s imperial system in decades.

There has long been public concern over the lack of male heirs in the imperial family - along with debate over whether women should be allowed

to take the throne.

Prime Minister Sanae Takachi and other conservative political leaders have voiced support for male-only succession rules, arguing its importance to imperial legitimacy. However, opinion polls show high public support for a female monarch.

In a June survey conducted by newspaper Mainichi Shimbun, involving more than 2,000 participants, more than 70% of respondents said they supported having a female emperor. Another poll, conducted by Kyodo News, found that 83% of respondents were in favour of allowing a woman to take the throne.

This country wants parents to stop abducting their own children

Japan: Anastasiya Minkova collapsed in shock when she arrived home from a trip last September to find that her husband had moved out and taken their two-year-old son.

The US-Russian citizen is now fighting for custody of the child, who CNN is calling Ren to protect his identity.

The last time Minkova saw Ren was six months ago - when they spent 30 minutes together, playing with toys at a children’s home, under the watchful eye of staff.

“My son held onto me tightly and would not let go. He pressed his head against my chest, and it felt like he was relieved to finally see

me,” Minkova told CNN.

“When the time was up, I felt completely heartbroken.” The family had been living on Shikoku island in Japan - a country where, until a law change this April, only one parent could be considered a child’s legal guardian after divorce. That parent was typically the one living with the child, which encouraged lawyers to advise their clients to flee with their children before divorce proceedings - a practice that could be considered parental abduction in other countries, but wasn’t illegal in Japan, lawyers told CNN.

“If a parent leaves the house with the children, it means the parent will

be their main caretaker during the legal procedure. It makes the parent’s position much stronger than the left-behind parent,” family lawyer Masanori Tanabe said.

Japan’s ministry of justice says the new law allows both parents to be recognized as legal guardians and should address the issue of child abductions by requiring divorcing parents to “respect each other’s dignity.”

If they don’t cooperate, and one takes the child, it may count against them in future custody proceedings, the ministry said. However, several lawyers told CNN it’s unclear how the courts will interpret the law, that

joint custody won’t be automatic, and that it doesn’t guarantee shared parenting time.

Campaigners and parents also say it does not strengthen the rights of “left-behind” parents, whose children have vanished into the sole care of former spouses. Troubling signs began to emerge in their relationship before she became pregnant with Ren in 2022, Minkova said. After their son’s birth, she said, her husband became increasingly critical of her parenting, demanding he make all decisions on how to raise the child.

Minkova said she had been considering divorce, but when she left to visit

family in Russia last September, she did not expect to return to an empty house.

“Looking back, it was the biggest mistake I’ve made in my life,” she told CNN. “But I never imagined that he would use that opportunity to move out.”

Minkova said Ren’s father got in touch with her by text, revealing that he left with their son, and allowed her to see him for one hour a week. She said their first meeting was at a mall, then at their family home in Shikoku, but that her husband set the terms. “It’s so horrible because I had to say goodbye to my son every time,” Minkova said. “He would put him in the car and

my son would look heartbroken every time.”

After an altercation at a supermarket with her husband over their son, police were called and the case was referred to Japan’s child welfare agency, according to Minkova and a police report seen by CNN. After several weeks of upheaval, during which Ren spent some time in temporary care, the Japanese government’s child welfare agency returned him to his father, she said.

Minkova is yet to file for divorce, so she officially maintains equal parental rights with Ren’s father, though not equal access. CNN reached out to Minkova’s husband, who said rel-

evant child welfare authorities in Japan have already been involved in this matter.

“As court proceedings are ongoing and the facts have not yet been determined, I must respectfully refrain from discussing the details,” he added.

The recent landmark revision to Japan’s Civil Code seeks to create more equal rights by introducing the concept of “kyodo shinken” for divorced parents. “It is hoped that parents will consider their child’s upbringing after divorce from the perspective of the child’s best interests, and that both parents will continue to be involved in the child’s upbringing in an appropriate

manner and fulfill their responsibilities even after the divorce,” the Justice Ministry said in a statement.

However, some experts say this is not a quick fix for parents like Minkova.

“The literal translation of the Japanese term ‘kyodo shinken’ is ‘parental authority’ and not ‘parental custody,’” said family lawyer Masami Kittaka, who is not involved in Minkova’s case.

“This means that both parents will have equal rights to make important decisions for their child - when it comes to things like education and healthcare - but there is still no guarantee that they will share parenting time.

Five dermatologist-recommended practices for maintaining healthy skin



Maintaining healthy skin does not necessitate intricate routines. Here are five straightforward habits, including the use of sunscreen, prioritizing sleep, and managing stress, that can contribute to achieving radiant skin. In an era of 10-step skincare routines and viral beauty trends, the truth is surprisingly simple: healthy skin is built through consistent habits, not complicated regimens. According to Dr Nishita Ranka, Dermatologist and

Founder, Dr Nishita’s Clinic for Skin, Hair & Aesthetics, Hyderabad, patients with the healthiest skin are often those who have mastered the basics.

1. Wear Sunscreen Every Single Day: If there is one anti-ageing product worth investing in, it is sunscreen. Dr Ranka recommends using a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher every day. Consistent use helps prevent pigmentation, premature wrinkles, collagen breakdown and even reduces the risk of skin cancer.

Rain or shine, indoors or outdoors, sunscreen remains non-negotiable.

2. Protect Your Skin Barrier: Healthy skin starts with a healthy skin barrier. According to Dr Ranka, over-exfoliation, harsh scrubs and constantly switching products can do more harm than good. For most people, a simple routine comprising a gentle cleanser, a suitable moisturiser and sunscreen forms the foundation of effective skincare.

3. Sleep Like Your Skin Depends on It Because It Does: During sleep, the skin undergoes repair and regeneration. Dr Ranka notes that chronic sleep deprivation is associated with dullness, increased inflammation, impaired barrier function and accelerated signs of ageing.

Skincare products can only do so much if the body’s natural recovery processes are compromised.

4. Feed Your Skin From Within: No serum can compensate for poor nutrition. As Dr Ranka explains, a diet rich in protein, fruits,

vegetables, nuts, seeds and omega-3 fatty acids provides the building blocks necessary for collagen production, wound healing and overall skin health.

Healthy skin, she says, starts from within.

5. Treat Stress as a Skin Concern: Stress affects far more than the mind, it can have visible consequences for the skin. Acne, eczema, psoriasis, rosacea, hair fall and premature ageing can all worsen during periods of chronic stress.

According to Dr Ranka, simple lifestyle practices such as regular exercise, mindfulness and adequate rest are often overlooked but can be powerful interventions for maintaining healthy skin.

Better Habits, Not More Products

The future of skincare is not necessarily about adding more products, it is about building better habits. Healthy skin is ultimately a reflection of how well we care for our bodies, both inside and out. Sometimes, the most effective skincare routine is also the simplest.

This Face Massage Routine Takes Less Than Ten Minutes, So No Salon Is Needed



Adhere to this straightforward, step-by-step guide for a facial massage that can be performed at home in only a few minutes, aiding in the relaxation of facial muscles and leaving your skin feeling rejuvenated.

A good skincare routine doesn’t always require expensive tools or salon appointments. A simple face massage done regularly at home can help relax facial muscles, improve circulation and give your skin a refreshed appearance. It only takes a few minutes a day and can easily be added to your morning or bedtime routine. Before you begin, wash your hands and cleanse your face. Apply a facial oil, serum or moisturizer to help your fingers glide smoothly across the skin.

Step 1: Warm Up The Neck : Using both hands, gently stroke upward from the base of your neck toward your jawline. This helps relax the area and prepares your skin for the massage.

Step 2: Define The Jawline: Place your knuckles at the centre of your chin and glide them along the jawline toward the ears. Repeat several times on both sides using light to medium pressure.

Step 3: Lift The Cheeks: Place your fingertips beside your nose and sweep outward and upward toward your temples. Repeat this motion slowly to help release tension in the cheek area.

Step 4: Smooth The Smile Lines : Using your index and middle fingers,

gently massage around the sides of your mouth and along the nasolabial folds in small circular motions.

Step 5: Relax The Eye Area : Using your ring fingers, lightly tap around the eye contour. Start from the inner corners, move beneath the eyes and continue toward the temples. Be extra gentle in this delicate area.

Step 6: Massage The Forehead: Place your fingertips between your eyebrows and move outward toward the temples. Follow with gentle upward strokes across the forehead to

help ease tension.

Step 7: Focus On Pressure Points: Apply gentle pressure to your temples and the area between your eyebrows. Hold for a few seconds before releasing.

Step 8: Finish With Lymphatic Drainage Strokes: Using light pressure, sweep your fingers from the center of your face outward and then down the sides of your neck. This helps complete the massage and leaves the face feeling refreshed.

In just five easy steps, you can achieve soft and tan-free feet with this at-home pedicure

Are cracked heels and tanned feet causing you discomfort? Consider this simple at-home pedicure utilizing kitchen ingredients to achieve soft, clean, and radiant feet without the cost of a salon visit. A pedicure encompasses more than merely cleaning your feet. It represents a comprehensive foot care regimen that involves soaking the feet, eliminating dead skin, treating cracked heels, shaping the nails, and softening the skin. Although salon pedicures may range from ₹500 to ₹1000, you can attain comparable results at home with basic ingredients at a minimal expense.

Start by filling a large tub with warm water. The wa-



ter should feel comfortably warm for your feet. Add 2 spoons of salt, a little baking powder and powdered alum. Salt helps relax tired feet, while alum and baking

powder help remove dirt and bacteria from the skin. This mixture also softens dead skin and rough heels gradually. Now add a small amount

of shampoo to the water and mix until it becomes slightly foamy. Shampoo helps remove dust, sweat and excess oil from the feet. Soak your feet in this water for 15 to 20 minutes. This step helps soften hard skin around the heels and may help reduce tanning while making the feet feel relaxed.

Once your feet become soft, take them out of the water and begin scrubbing gently using a pumice stone or loofah. Rub around the heels, soles and toes carefully. This helps remove dead skin easily and makes cracked heels appear cleaner and smoother. Clean around the nails properly so the feet look fresh and well-maintained.

To brighten the skin naturally, cut a tomato in half and apply a little turmeric and lemon juice on it. Massage it gently onto your feet for 5 to 7 minutes. Tomato helps deep-clean the skin, lemon may help reduce tanning and turmeric adds a natural glow. With regular use, this can help reduce dullness and leave the skin looking cleaner and brighter.

Finally, wash your feet with clean water and apply coconut oil or a good moisturiser while gently massaging the skin. This helps keep the feet soft for longer. Wearing socks outdoors and applying foot cream at night may also help maintain healthy and smooth feet over time.

Purchasing a foundation based on your skin type



Foundation serves as the cornerstone of any makeup regimen, establishing a uniform complexion and facilitating the smooth application of other makeup products. Nevertheless, with a myriad of formulas, finishes, and shades on the market, selecting the appropriate foundation can be daunting. This purchasing guide aims to assist you in grasping the essential elements to evaluate when selecting a foundation that aligns with your skin type, tone, and lifestyle.

1. Know your skin type

The first step in choosing a foundation is understanding your skin type.

Oily skin: Look for oil-free, matte, or long-wear foundations that control shine and reduce excess oil throughout the day.

Dry skin: Choose hydrating or dewy-finish foundations enriched with moisturising ingredients such as hyaluronic acid or glycerin.

Combination skin: A natural or satin-finish foundation offers a balanced look by controlling oil in the T-zone while keeping dry areas comfortable. Sensitive skin: Opt for fragrance-free, non-comedogenic, and dermatologist-tested formulas that minimise the risk of irritation. Matching your foundation to your skin type ensures better wear, comfort, and appearance.

2. Find your perfect shade: Selecting the right shade is one of the most important aspects of buying foundation. A mismatched shade can make makeup appear unnatural. Test foundation

on your jawline rather than your hand or wrist, as facial skin tone often differs from the rest of the body. The correct shade should blend seamlessly into your skin without leaving noticeable lines. If you’re between shades due to seasonal tanning or lightening, consider purchasing two shades and mixing them for a customised match.

3. Understand your undertone: Besides skin depth, undertones play a crucial role.

Cool Undertones: Pink, red, or blue hues. Warm Undertones: Yellow, golden, or peach hues. Neutral Undertones: A balance of warm and cool tones.

Olive Undertones: Greenish or golden-green tint.

Choosing a foundation that matches your undertone creates a more natural finish and prevents your complexion from looking too pink, yellow, or ashy.

4. Choose the right coverage: Foundation coverage determines how much it conceals. Choose coverage based on your daily makeup preferences, events, and skin concerns, rather than assuming more coverage is always better. Light coverage: Evens out skin tone while allowing natural skin to show through.

Medium coverage: Covers minor blemishes, redness, and uneven pigmentation.

Full coverage: Conceals acne scars, dark spots, and significant discolouration with minimal need for concealer.

5. Pick the finish you prefer: Foundation finishes

affect your overall makeup look. Matte finish: Controls shine and works well for oily skin. Dewy finish: Gives skin a fresh, radiant appearance and suits dry or mature skin.

Natural or satin finish: Mimics healthy skin and works well for most skin types. The finish should complement both your skin type and the look you want to achieve.

6. Select the best formula

Foundations come in several formats: Liquid foundation: The most versatile option, suitable for almost every skin type and coverage preference. Cream foundation: Offers rich coverage and works well for dry or mature skin. Powder foundation: Lightweight and ideal for oily skin or quick touch-ups. Stick foundation: Convenient for travel and easy to apply on the go. Serum foundation: Lightweight with skincare benefits, ideal for those seeking a natural finish. Choose a formula that fits your routine and comfort level.

7. Look for skin-friendly ingredients: Modern foundations often contain beneficial skincare ingredients. If you’re prone to acne, choose non-comedogenic formulas that are less likely to clog pores. 8. Consider longevity: Think about how long you need your makeup to last. For workdays, weddings, or special occasions, long-wear and transfer-resistant foundations provide better durability. For everyday use, a lightweight formula may offer greater comfort even if it requires occasional touch-ups. Climate also matters. Humid environments generally benefit from matte, sweat-resistant formulas, while dry climates may require more hydrating options.

9. Test before you buy: Whenever possible, test the foundation in natural daylight. Allow it to sit on your skin for 15–30 minutes to see if it oxidises, changes colour, or causes discomfort. Reading verified customer reviews can also provide insight into wear time, shade accuracy, and performance on different skin types.

The most popular beauty trend this summer is pastel floral nail designs

Every few years, beauty trends strive to bring back floral designs, claiming that this time they are unique. Typically, they are not. However, the approach to pastel floral nails for summer 2026 appears refreshingly self-aware, exhibiting a softer, cleaner, and significantly more sophisticated style compared to the maximalist nail art that prevailed in earlier seasons. This isn’t about loud hibiscus decals or overly intricate garden manicures.

Instead, the new floral manicure leans minimalist, almost whisper-soft in execution. Think translucent petals floating across sheer nail beds, delicate hand-painted blooms on negative space, and shades that resemble melted gelato more than a bouquet.

According to Kausar, Beauty Manager, Bblunt Salon India, the appeal lies in the understated polish of the trend. “Pastel floral nails are trending this summer because they look soft, fresh, and extremely polished,” she says. “Shades like lilac, baby pink, mint green, and butter yellow instantly brighten the hands while giving a clean, elegant feel.”

The shift is also deeply tied to restraint. Unlike the heavily detailed nail art cycles of the past, this season’s florals are intentionally sparse. Tiny blossoms placed on a single accent nail or micro florals

tracing minimalist French tips are replacing full-coverage designs. “What makes floral nails look surprisingly chic right now is the minimal approach,” explains Kausar. “Using floral details only on French tips or a single accent nail keeps the look modern and wearable rather than overwhelming.”

And wearable is precisely the point. The manicure trend arrives at a moment when beauty aesthetics are leaning quieter and more intentional overall.

In fashion, beauty, and interiors alike, maximalism is giving way to softness, texture, and detail that reveals itself slowly.

At Envi Salons and Spa, that evolution is being interpreted through what Namika Kant, Technical Expert, Envi Salons, describes as “micro-artistry and dimensional layering.”

“Forget the old ‘florals for spring’ cliché,” says Kant. “The 2026 aesthetic is centred around translucent petals created using jelly-base polishes and ultra-fine hand-painted strokes over frosted lavender, pistachio cream, and muted coral tones.”

The result feels less Pinterest-core and more editorial beauty campaign. The secret, according to Kant, lies in the balance of scale and negative space. “By placing delicate florals over sheer, skin-tone bases, the nail art gains a much more sophisticated, high-fashion edge,” she explains.



Texture is also quietly shaping the trend. While glossy glazed finishes continue to dominate social media, many nail artists are now experimenting with velvet-matte top coats, soft chrome accents, and micro shimmer overlays to create dimension without visual heaviness.

“For clients who want something more elevated, pairing pastels with subtle chrome or a high-gloss finish adds a premium feel without looking overdone,” says Kausar.

Part of the reason the trend works so well, particularly in India, is its versatility.

Pastel floral nails sit comfortably between occasionwear and everyday styling, delicate enough for brunches and vacations, yet refined enough to complement wedding guest wardrobes and festive dressing.

Most importantly, the trend doesn’t demand perfection. These florals feel intentionally undone, slightly diffused, and almost watercolor-like in finish.

Which may be why they feel unexpectedly modern. Because perhaps the chicest beauty trends right now are the ones that don’t try too hard to announce themselves at all.

ENTERTAINMENT

Vicky Kaushal's sweet birthday post for his 'jaan' Katrina Kaif

Mumbai : Katrina Kaif recently celebrated her birthday with an intimate gathering of close friends and family. Giving fans a glimpse of the celebrations, Vicky Kaushal shared a romantic birthday post dedicated to his actress-wife.

Taking to Instagram, Vicky posted an adorable photo of the couple in which Katrina is seen hugging him as he holds a piece of birthday cake in his hand. Both are all smiles, radiating warmth

and happiness. A "Happy Birthday Katrina" banner can also be seen in the background. Sharing the picture, Vicky simply captioned it in Hindi, "Jaan ka janmdin."

The post was flooded with love from celebrities and fans alike. Filmmaker Farah Khan commented, "Happy birthday Kat.. ur mummy misses." One fan wrote, "They both are so adorable", while another added, "Happiest birthday to Queen Bring her back in movies, world



is missing her screen presence on bigscreen @vickykaushal09 pls (sic)"Katrina's sister, Isa-

belle also shared a sweet picture with the actress to wish her on her special day.

Talking of Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif, the couple tied the knot in an intimate ceremony at Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan on December 9, 2021, after dating for a couple of years. The couple welcomed their first child, Vihaan Kaushal, in November 2025 and have largely kept him away from the public eye.

On the work front, Vicky

is awaiting the release of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love & War, where he shares the screen with Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt. The film is slated to release in theatres in 2027. Katrina, meanwhile, was last seen in Merry Christmas alongside Vijay Sethupathi and is yet to officially announce her next project. While reports recently claimed that she would make her comeback with an OTT project, her team later dismissed the speculation.

Rukmini Vasanth back on dragon sets in Hyderabad



Hyderabad : The shoot of Jr NTR's much-awaited action entertainer Dragon is progressing at a brisk pace in Hyderabad. After a short break, the film's team has resumed production, with leading lady Rukmini Vasanth joining the latest schedule alongside Jr NTR.

Earlier, the makers had simultaneously filmed portions of both instalments of the ambitious project. The current schedule is expected to feature several key scenes involving the lead pair as director Prashanth Neel continues work on one of Indian cinema's biggest action spectacles. Rukmini Vasanth has emerged as one of the most sought-after actresses in South Indian cinema following the success of Sapta Saagaradaache Ello: Side A and Sapta Saagaradaache Ello: Side B. She has since bagged several high-profile projects, including Yash-starrer Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups and Dragon. Reports also suggest that she has been cast in Rajinikanth's upcoming film Dharman, directed by Ashwath Marimuthu.

Expressing her excitement

about Dragon earlier this year, Rukmini had described working on the project as a special opportunity. She had also praised Jr NTR as a "true powerhouse" after the film's official glimpse was unveiled on the actor's birthday in May. While details about her character in Dragon remain under wraps, the actress plays Mellisa in Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups. Director Geetu Mohandas has previously praised her performance, describing it as intelligent, restrained and layered.

Set in 1967 against the backdrop of the illegal international opium and heroin trade following the British departure from India, Dragon is mounted on a massive scale. Jr NTR plays Luger, a ruthless assassin, while Anil Kapoor essays the role of a Narcotics Bureau chief. The film generated tremendous buzz with its action-packed first glimpse, introducing Jr NTR's intense new avatar. Directed by Prashanth Neel, Dragon is scheduled to release in theatres on June 11, 2027, and is expected to be one of the biggest Indian releases of the year.

Arjun Bijlani reacts to Mouni Roy dating rumours: 'just friends'

Mumbai : Television stars Arjun Bijlani and Mouni Roy recently found themselves at the centre of dating speculation after a video of the two leaving a dinner outing together surfaced on social media. The clip quickly went viral after a pap page suggested there could be more than just friendship between the longtime colleagues. The rumours soon gained traction online, prompting discussions among fans. Arjun has now firmly shut down the speculation. Reacting to the reports, the actor dismissed the rumours as completely baseless and reminded people that a man and a woman can simply be friends without their relationship being romanticised.

In a long statement, Arjun Bijlani called out "clickbait pages" and criticised the spread of misleading narratives. The statement read, "Dear Clickbait pages, Two people who've

shared a friendship for 15+ years don't suddenly become a couple because a gossip page needs a headline. Sometimes, people simply show up for each other, especially when a friend is going through a difficult time. Not every friendship needs a romantic angle for views. A little fact-checking before publishing would go a long way. Let's be responsible with the narratives we create." Arjun and Mouni have shared a close friendship for over 15 years. Their bond became even more popular among audiences after they starred together in Ektaa Kapoor's hit supernatural drama Naagin in 2015. The dating rumours surfaced just a couple of months after the actress confirmed her separation from husband Suraj Nambiar. Announcing the decision on social media, the actor said that they had mutually chosen to part ways.

Sameera Reddy appreciates Sohail Khan's support during a severe on-set panic attack

Mumbai : Sameera Reddy made her Bollywood debut in 2002 alongside Sohail Khan in Maine Dil Tujhko Diya. While she wasn't particularly keen on becoming an actor, the success of her music video for Pankaj Udhas' Ahista Kijiye Baatein in 2000 changed the course of her career. In a new chat, she has recalled how nervous she was shooting her debut film, especially since Salman Khan and Aishwarya Rai were also present on set.

Speaking to Hauterrfly, Sameera Reddy mentioned, "After shooting for a music video randomly, I came back, and it became a superhit song. I thought to myself, 'I don't want to do this.' I used to get so many panic attacks in the beginning. When I did my first film, Maine Dil Tujhko Diya, I remember the first shot. Aishwarya Rai and Salman Khan, all sitting there. They were producing the film, and Sohail Khan was with me." She contin-



ued, "I remember all I had to say was, 'Why are you not going?' As soon as he said action, I mumbled the dialogue. I was so scared, my hands were trembling and sweating. But I remember that my therapist said, 'What scares you? If you break it, you are going to break so many other things that are scary.' That's what I teach my children."

She also revealed that she faced colourism while shooting the film. The actress said, "In my first film, Maine Dil

Tujhko Diya, I was made two to three shades lighter. I almost looked grey! I used to do full body makeup to match the colour of my face with my body. Do you know how many women have it in their own families? Her own parents and in-laws say, 'You're dark or fat.' What the hell! Who has given the definition of beauty?"

Released in 2002, Maine Dil Tujhko Diya marked the Bollywood debut of Sohail Khan as a leading actor.

Directed by Sohail Khan himself, the romantic action drama also stars Sameera Reddy in her Hindi film debut, alongside Sanjay Dutt, Kabir Bedi, Dalip Tahil and Rajpal Yadav. The film follows Ajay, a fearless young man who falls in love with Ayesha, the daughter of a wealthy businessman. Their relationship is put to the test when Ayesha's father disapproves of the match and goes to great lengths to keep the couple apart.

Prabhas sparks social media storm with sacred thread detail in new Fauzi look

Hyderabad : The newly unveiled Rebel Star Prabhas' Fauzi release date poster has dominated conversations across the country, with audiences praising its haunting details.

Instead of presenting Prabhas in a conventional heroic pose, director Hanu Raghavapudi has chosen a deeply emotional and visually striking composition. Seated alone in the middle of a battlefield after an apparent massacre, drenched in blood and exhaustion, Prabhas radiates pain, sacrifice, and resilience. His Jandiyam (sacred thread) around his neck, adds another dimension to the

character, blending spirituality with the harsh realities of war, while the rifle resting beside him silently narrates the intensity of the conflict he has endured.

The brilliance of the poster lies in what it doesn't explain. The battlefield, the coded background, the mysterious numerical patterns, and the official-looking stamps have transformed the artwork into a puzzle. Social media has been flooded with interpretations, and discussions about the film's possible storyline, historical setting, and emotional core.

What elevates the post-

er beyond a conventional release announcement is director Hanu Raghavapudi's meticulous creative approach. Every element appears intentionally placed, transforming the artwork into a puzzle that rewards observation and interpretation. It is storytelling through design, leaving audiences eager to uncover what lies beneath the surface. The response has gone well beyond fan celebrations, with cinema lovers appreciating its artistic vision and cinematic depth. "Prabhas has truly set social media on fire with his latest look, source concludes.



Farewell to an icon: Hal Williams of '227' fame passes away

Washington : Hal Williams, the TV veteran who appeared in American sitcom staples like '227' and 'Sanford and Son,' has passed away at the age of 91, according to his manager, reported Variety. Sitcom '227' ran from 1985 to 1990, and followed a group of middle-aged tenants living together in an apartment building. Williams starred as Lester Jenkins, who was husband to Marla Gibbs' Mary Jenkins and father to Regina King's Brenda Jenkins. '227' aired for 116 episodes across five seasons on NBC. Series star Jackie Harry won an Emmy for best supporting actress for her work on the show in 1987. Other cast members included Helen Martin, Alaina Reed-

Hall and Curtis Baldwin.

Williams appeared in 22 episodes of 'Sanford and Son' as Officer 'Smitty' Smith. The character was part of a duo with Howard Platt's Officer "Hoppy" Hopkins. The pair had a recurring bit where Hopkins would lead by outlining a case with complicated police jargon, and it would be up to Smith to spell it all out again in layman's terms, reported Variety. In a recent interview with WKYC, as quoted by Variety, Williams explained how the Smitty and Hoppy gag came to be: "We did it in one time in rehearsal, and the producers thought it was funny. We did it in the first or second episode, and it clicked. Some days, we would come to rehearsal, and



they didn't have anything solid. [The producers would then say,] 'Go out, take a break for two hours, and bring us something back.'

Williams' other TV credits include "On the Rocks," "The Waltons," "Private Benjamin" and "The Sinbad Show." His most recent TV role was on CBS' "Matlock" remake. On the film side, Williams appeared in "Hardcore," "The Rookie," "Percy & Thunder," "Guess Who," and "Flight."

Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas reveal the DM that started their love story



Mumbai : Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Nick Jonas' love story began with a direct message on social media. Years before they started dating, Nick reached out to the actress on X (formerly Twitter), asking if they could meet. Priyanka recently appeared on the Hey Jonas podcast, where the couple revisited the moment that sparked their romance.

Nick also revealed the very first message he sent her. The singer-actor shared that his introduction to Priyan-

ka came through his brother, Kevin Jonas. He said, "My introduction to you was by way of Kevin saying, 'Hey, have you seen this show on ABC? It's called Quantico.' And I said, 'I have not.' And then, as he's talking about it, I look up on Sunset Boulevard, and there's a billboard of your face. So then I go to Twitter, and I'm like, 'I wonder if she follows me,' which you did. I sent you a direct message."

Priyanka added, "That's such a crazy story because Kevin and I like

the same shows, and Nick and I never like the same shows." The couple then shared a screenshot of their first conversation. Nick's opening message read, "Hello. I've heard from a few people that we should meet. I have to agree with these people. Are you in LA anytime soon?" Priyanka replied, "Hey. Graham's told me so much about you. Let's text. More private. My team can access this." Joe and Kevin Jonas then dramatically reenacted the exchange as Nick and Priyanka blushed and laughed throughout the segment.

Nick first messaged Priyanka in 2016 after hearing about her from mutual friends. The two met in person at the Vanity Fair Oscars after-party in 2017 and began dating in 2018. Nick proposed to Priyanka during a trip to Greece in July that year, and the couple got married in December 2018 at the Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur with both Hindu and Christian wedding ceremonies. In January 2022, they welcomed their daughter, Malti Marie Chopra Jonas, via surrogacy. The couple frequently shares glimpses of their family life and continues to divide their time between India and the US.

Kiran Rao advocates for peace: urges government to open talks with Sonam Wangchuk and protestors

Mumbai : Filmmaker Kiran Rao has extended her support to Sonam Wangchuk and the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) amid their ongoing protest against the alleged NEET examination paper leak. Taking to Instagram, she penned a heartfelt note expressing solidarity with the protesters and urging the government to address their demands.

She wrote, "I stand in solidarity with Sonam Wangchuk, Abhijeet Dipke, the CJP, and all the citizens of this country, young and old, who are protesting for the rights of our students. My salaams to Sonam ji, Neha, Maneesh, Ameen and all the others for undertaking a hunger strike to make sure that justice is served. Our nation is indebted to you for shaking us out of our apathy and reminding us that every voice counts." Rao continued, "It is so distressing to witness the complete silence that this hunger strike has been met with, even after 19 days. What will it take for those in power to listen to the



people?... it is shocking and inhumane." She further urged the government to initiate a dialogue with the protestors. "I urge the government to enter into a dialogue with the protestors, to understand the pain of the students, and end this impasse. We the people have a right to be heard. #sonamwangchuk #neet #cockroach-

janataparty" Sonam Wangchuk began his indefinite hunger strike at Delhi's Jantar Mantar in support of a nationwide protest against alleged irregularities and paper leaks in competitive examinations, particularly NEET-UG. Joining the movement led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), Wangchuk has demanded the

resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, greater accountability for examination failures, and comprehensive reforms to restore trust in India's examination system. He has said his fast will continue until the government meaningfully responds to the protestors' demands.

Jude Bellingham Breaks Silence in Animated On-Field Exchange with Lionel Messi



Atlanta: England midfielder Jude Bellingham downplayed what seemed to be a furious discussion with Lionel Messi after his team’s 2-1 loss to Argentina in the FIFA World Cup 2026 quarterfinal in Atlanta on Wednesday (local time), maintaining that “it was nothing bad,” according to FOX Sports. Argentina won a remarkable comeback against England in Atlanta, overcoming a first-half lead with Enzo Fernandez scoring the equalizer before Lautaro Martinez scored the stop-

page-time winner to put the reigning champions into a title match against Spain. Messi had a critical part in Argentina’s triumph. Although he did not score, the captain assisted on both of the defending champions’ goals, contributing significantly to their comeback victory.A first-half interaction between Bellingham and Messi drew a lot of attention, as the two players looked to be having an impassioned conversation, gesticulating with their arms and reacting expressively

before walking off.However, after the game, Bellingham stressed that his altercation with Messi was about a foul and that there was nothing serious behind it. Bellingham told FOX Sports, “We were actually discussing a foul. It wasn’t awful. I’m sure everyone will make a big deal about it, but it actually wasn’t that huge. I believed there was a foul before, and he asked, ‘What about the one on me?’”

I told him, ‘You’re strong enough to take it.’ You understand?”Bellingham characterized meeting Messi as an honor, recognizing him as one of the greatest players but expressing sadness in losing. ”It was an honor to play against him; there was nothing like it against him. I’m clearly on the losing side, which hurts a lot. “But it’s an honor to compete against one of the best,” Bellingham remarked.The victory qualified Argentina for the World Cup 2026 final, where they will meet Spain on Sunday, July 19 (local time), while England’s chances of reaching their first World Cup fi-

nal since 1966 were dashed. Argentina pulled out an incredible late comeback in the contest. The first half was a fiercely contested duel, with both sides vying for midfield possession and producing few clear chances. England ultimately broke the deadlock in the 55th minute, with Anthony Gordon finishing Morgan Rogers’ cross to put the Three Lions ahead.After gaining the lead, England retreated defensively, allowing Argentina to apply pressure. The reigning champions rallied impressively, with Jordan Pickford making crucial stops and Alexis MacAllister hitting the post before Argentina equalised. Enzo Fernandez scored in the 85th minute after receiving an assist from Lionel Messi to tie the game. Argentina completed their comeback in stoppage time with a cross from Messi to Lautaro Martinez, who headed home the winner. Despite England’s late attempts, Argentina advanced to the final. England will now face France in the third-place match, with Argentina facing Spain for the trophy.

A Congress worker at Rahul Gandhi’s Dehradun event was killed after an iron rod fell on him



Dehradun, July 17: A 65-year-old Congress worker died Thursday evening after an iron rod from a tent constructed for Rahul Gandhi’s scheduled event fell on him at the Bannu School grounds in Dehradun, according to a party leader.Confirming the incident, Congress state vice-president Suryakant Dhasmana stated that the victim, Amar Mehta, was monitoring preparations beneath the tent when an iron

rod from the temporary structure fell, inflicting a serious head injury.According to Dhasmana, Mehta was transported to the hospital and certified dead by physicians. Congress leader Gandhi is expected to attend the ‘Chhatron ki Goonj’ (Voice of kids) program on Friday at the Bannu School grounds, where he would speak with kids about topics such as question paper leaks.

Another Split or Merger? A Tale of Two NCPs and Three Meetings With Devendra Fadnavis

Mumbai, July 17: Internal rumblings inside Sunetra Pawar’s NCP look to be escalating. And things are not calm in the other NCP, commanded by Sharad Pawar. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis is at the center of Maharashtra’s high-stakes political drama. Ajit Pawar’s son and party MP Parth Pawar met with Devendra Fadnavis at his apartment the day after senior party officials Praful Patel and Sunil Tatkare met with him late at night on Wednesday, sparking political conjecture.There has been no formal statement from either side on the meetings. According to sources, the conversation centered on recent events after Fadnavis met with Tatkare and Patel. The meeting reportedly caught NCP leaders by surprise, with party chief and Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar seeking an explanation from Sunil Tatkare. Tatkare, on his part, downplayed the meeting, saying it was not political and he did not feel the need to keep Sunetra Pawar in the loop. The NCP’s internal conflict has recently made headlines. The party looks to be divided into two sections. The first is with Sunetra Pawar and her son Parth Pawar, the second with Praful Patel and Tatkare. Insiders claim Patel and Tatkare are dissatisfied with Parth Pawar’s expanding



influence in the party and his leadership style.Sunetra Pawar withdrew from the Upper House, prompting Parth Pawar’s nomination to the Rajya Sabha. Sunetra Pawar was appointed Deputy Chief Minister following Ajit Pawar’s unexpected death in an aircraft crash. Discontent within the party also came to the fore when a senior leader openly challenged Sunetra Pawar’s position as NCP chief. National Secretary Sachchidanand Singh questioned the process through which she was elected as party chief, calling it “illegal, non-existent, and void”. Interestingly, it was not just leaders of the ruling NCP who met the Chief Minister. Sharad Pawar faction leader Jayant Patil also met the Chief Minister around the same time as the NCP leaders, fueling further political speculation. Tatkare, however, said the

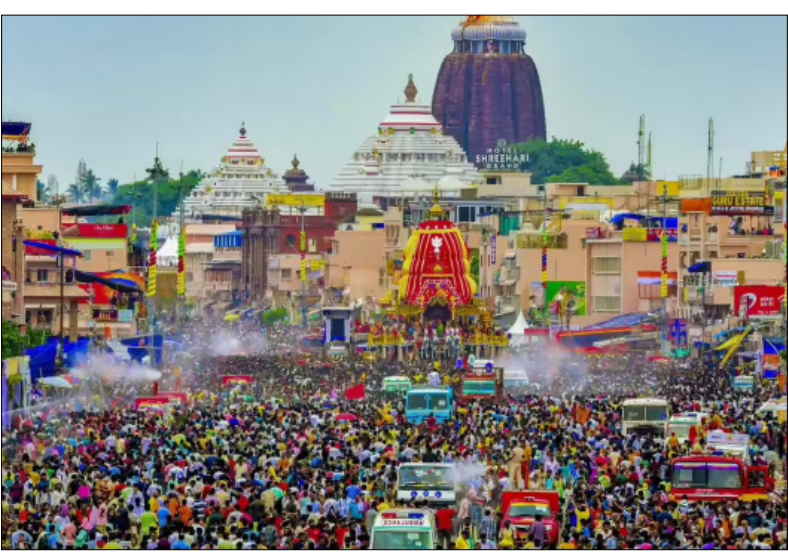
presence of Patel and Patil at the Chief Minister’s residence was just a coincidence, and the purpose of his meeting was purely administrative and not political.A former lawmaker, who declined to be named, told NDTV: “Three senior leaders from two rival factions meeting the Chief Minister at night cannot be a coincidence.”The meetings have fueled buzz of a likely merger of the two NCP factions.Tatkare, however, rejected any such move, saying talks were on when Ajit Pawar was alive but have been in cold storage since his death.According to insiders, Praful Patel and Sunil Tatkare are in talks with a section of NCP (SP) leaders for a possible switch to the NDA. The Sharad Pawar party has denied any such move, with party MP Supriya Sule insisting “we are with the INDIA alliance”.

PV Sindhu Reached the Semifinals After Nozomi Okuhara withdraws

Tokyo: PV Sindhu, an Indian star shuttler, advanced to the Japan Open semifinals after withdrawing from her Japanese opponent Nozomi Okuhara in Tokyo on Friday. This was Sindhu’s third semifinal of the season, following the Malaysian Super 1000 and the Australian Super 500. Furthermore, this is her first Super 750 semifinal appearance since the 2023 Denmark Open. The 31-year-old Indian, looking for her first victory of the season, will play Tokyo Olympic champion and world No. 4 Chinese shuttler Chen Yufei, whom she trails 6-8 in head-to-head records. Sindhu has suffered a loss in the last five meeting with Yu-Fei. A victory in the semifinal would not only end Sindhu’s that losing streak but also secure Sindhu’s first Super 750 final in nearly three years. The two-time Olympic medalist, who is the only Indian challenger left standing at the of the BWF Super 750 tournament, defeated world No. 5 Han Yue of China 21-16, 21-14 in just 35 minutes to make the final.Eight.This year, YuFei, 28, won the Indonesia Masters and advanced to the Super 500 finals in Thailand and Malaysia. She also regularly made it to the semifinals of the Super 750s in Singapore and India, as well as the Super 1000s Malaysia Open and All England. Earlier, India’s mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto bowed out after losing 20-22, 17-21 to China’s Feng Yan Zhe and Huang Dong Ping in the pre-quartersfinals. India’s challenge suffered another setback in the women’s singles draw, where Unnati Hooda was beaten by Chinese Taipei’s Huang Yu-Hsun despite taking the second game. India had already lost both of its men’s doubles combinations on Tuesday after Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, along with MR Arjun and Hariharan Amsakuranan, bowed out in the opening round, with the former pair sustaining another injury.



Odisha government confirms two deaths, denies stampede during Puri Rath Yatra



New Delhi, July 17: The Odisha government has verified the deaths of two devotees but refuted allegations of a stampede-like occurrence during the annual Rath Yatra celebration, which began in the sacred seaside town of Puri with lakhs of people from across the state, country, and overseas. According to an official statement issued by the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO), the world-famous Rath Yatra 2026 of Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannath, Mahaprabhu Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Chakraraj Sudarshana was celebrated on Thursday in Puri with great religious zeal, devotion, and exemplary administrative coordination. Despite bad weather, the celebration attracted an estimated 8-9 lakh devotees from Odisha, the country, and overseas, demonstrating their unwavering trust in the deities.All of the religious ceremonies associated with the event, including the hauling of the three chariots, went smoothly and as planned.

Govardhan Peethadheeshwar Jagadguru Shankaracharya also approached the chariots and offered prayers. The state government made thorough and multi-layered plans to ensure the festival’s success,” the CMO said in a statement. The state government also stated that extensive planning was carried out well in advance, involving all stakeholder departments, including Police, Health, Fire Services, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Transport, Municipal Administration, Public Health Engineering, Energy, and other line departments. Round-the-clock monitoring, the deployment of adequate security personnel, extensive CCTV coverage, public announcement systems, traffic regulation, sanitation measures, drinking water facilities, emergency response teams, and medical infrastructure all contributed to devotees’ safety and convenience during the festival.The Odisha government

said that due to the enormous number of devotees and the persistent rains, cases of tiredness, dehydration, suffocation, and mild health-related discomfort were reported throughout the day. ”During the celebration, seven people were ill and were quickly removed by the deployed troops and sent to the hospital. Among them, one male devotee over the age of 60 died, and the specific cause of death is being investigated by the relevant authorities,” the state administration stated.According to the CMO, in a separate and unconnected occurrence, a male devotee over the age of 35 experienced a heart attack and died despite receiving urgent medical attention.Furthermore, several devotees felt ill as a result of the constant rain, and they were treated in hospitals before being discharged. ”Overall, the event was quiet, orderly, and well-managed. The authorities stressed that there was no stampede or a systemic breakdown in crowd management.The government, security agencies, servants, and volunteers worked together to guarantee that devotees could travel freely.The situation remained normal during the event, with all critical services running well.Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi extended his deepest thanks to the servants and praised the lakhs of devotees for their patience, discipline, and collaboration, all of which led to the festival’s peaceful and successful conclusion. The Chief Minister emphasized the state government’s unshakable commitment to ensuring that every devotee has a safe, dignified, and convenient experience during the sacred festival by continuously improving infrastructure, public services, and administration.

Rohit Sharma “Wasn’t Happy”: report shares inside details of BCCI’s ‘Last ODI’ meeting

England: Indian cricket is abuzz with rumors that one of the most renowned ODI batsmen, Rohit Sharma, would retire. The chatter began even before the England series, as the BCCI and Team India worked out preparations for next year’s ODI World Cup. Rohit Sharma will be beyond 40 when India plays the ODI World Cup in late 2027. While his play has been decent, the fact that an in-form younger opener, Yashasvi Jaiswal, has been sidelined for an extended period of time has not gone unnoticed. According to various reports on Thursday, the third India versus England ODI on July 19 at Lord’s might be Rohit’s last appearance for the Indian side. According to the Indian Express, Rohit met with BCCI officials during the present three-match ODI series against England, and the opener ‘wasn’t satisfied’ with their choice.The article also stated that the BCCI selection committee told Rohit that they had opted to‘move



on’ from the former India captain following the ODI series. The selection committee allegedly talked with Sharma and coach Gautam Gambhir last week.The BCCI selectors intend to give young players like Yashasvi Jaiswal game time as they prepare for the 2027 World Cup. ”The selectors have decided that henceforth they will not select Rohit Sharma in ODIs. If he wants to bow out gracefully or chooses not to call it a day immediately, that is entirely his personal decision. However, the message is clear: the selectors will not pick him for ODIs after the game at Lord’s on Sunday,” a BCCI source

told IANS on Thursday.On May 7, 2025, Rohit quit Test cricket ahead of India’s five-match tour of England and was shortly replaced by Shubman Gill as the Test captain. In 286 ODI games, Rohit has amassed 11,731 runs and firmly established himself in Indian cricket folklore as one of the most explosive and dependable openers in the 50-over format.He also led India with aplomb in 56 ODIs, including guiding the side to the 2023 World Cup final with his all-out attacking approach and astute leadership. Rohit also captained India to the 2025 Men’s Champions Trophy triumph in the UAE.

Holders U Mumba pick up their second win on the bounce, beating Maharashtra rivals Pune



Goa: U Mumba TT, the reigning champions, continued their resurgence in Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) Season 7, defeating Maharashtra rivals PBG Pune Jaguars 9-6 on Thursday at the Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium in Taleigaon near Panaji to win their second consecutive match and climb to the top of the standings. After a cagey start, U Mumba took control with a powerful Mixed Doubles performance from captain Manush Shah and Anna Hursey, before France’s Lilian Bardet kept his nerve in a dramatic Golden Point finale against Omar Assar to put the tie beyond Pune’s reach.

The Maharashtra Derby lived true to its title, with Pune taking first blood as Snehit Suravajjula continued his undefeated streak this season, coming back from a game down to overcome Manush in the opening Men’s Singles. U Mumba replied promptly with Hursey, who put on another calm performance to defeat Diya Chitale in three games and even the tie. The momentum shifted decisively in the mixed

doubles, where Manush and Hursey combined superbly to sweep Snehit and Prithika Pavade in straight games, handing the defending champions a crucial cushion. Pune’s hopes then rested on Omar Assar, who took the opening game against Lilian Bardet before the Frenchman fought back to level the contest.

The decider produced the tie’s defining moments, as Assar stunned the crowd with a breathtaking around-the-net winner—later named the Shot of the Tie—before Bardet held his nerve on the Golden Point to complete the comeback and seal U Mumba’s second successive victory.With the tie already decided, Pavade ensured Pune finished on a positive note with a 2-1 victory over Anusha Kutumbale. The pair produced the longest rally of the season in the second game, a 31-shot exchange that saw Pavade absorb wave after wave of attack from deep behind the table before Anusha eventually blinked. Anusha bounced back to take the third game on Golden Point with a scintillating backhand winner. Manush received the Indian Player of the Tie title, while Hursey was awarded Foreign Player and Player of the Tie.Earlier, in the UTT Juniors, UTT’s grassroots tournament that runs concurrently with Season 7, Dabang Delhi TTC edged UP Prometheus 5-4 to keep their playoff chances alive; despite the close loss, UP stayed solidly in the top four race. Ahmedabad APL Pipers likewise finished with a 5-4 win over PBG Pune Jaguars, although both teams were ousted from the semifinals.

Aamir Khan “Chatur is incorrect” Says 3 Idiots ‘Not Based’ On Sonam Wangchuk

New Delhi, July 17: Bollywood actor Aamir Khan has categorically denied that his renowned character, Phunsukh Wangdu (Rancho), from the 2009 hit 3 Idiots, was based on the life of Ladakhi entrepreneur and education reformer Sonam Wangchuk. Speaking at a public event, Khan stated that neither he nor the film’s authors knew anything about Wangchuk at the time the film was being filmed. While setting the record right, the actor voiced great moral support for Wangchuk, who is presently on an indefinite hunger strike, as well as significant concern about his rapidly deteriorating health. ”There is a misconception that 3 Idiots was based on Sonam Wangchuk’s life. That is not true. When the film was being written, we had no information about Sonam Wangchuk, and I did not know him personally. Having said that, the work Sonam Wangchuk is doing is absolutely right. He is on a hunger strike, and many people feel he should end it now because his health is deteriorating,” Khan said during a post-screening Q&A session at the London Indian Film Festival (LIFF).Khan also used the platform to directly address a recent viral video posted by his 3 Idiots co-star Omi Vaidya, who famously played the character Chatur Ramalingam. In the video, Vaidya had publicly backed Wangchuk’s protest and repeated the claim that Phunsukh Wangdu was based on the Ladakhi engineer, leading to immense social media pressure on Khan to break his silence. ”What Chatur (Omi Vaidya) said in the video is incorrect,” Khan said.He further noted that Wangchuk’s work stands entirely on its own merit and “doesn’t have to be based on a character of 3 Idiots for us to respect him”.

Rohit Sharma retirement speculation explained as Indian cricket braces for messy weekend fallout

New Delhi: “50-over World Cup for me is the actual WC. We have grown up watching it. Moreover, it was happening in India in front of our fans. We played so well until that final.” Emerging from the painful, silent slumber that followed the heartbreaking 2023 World Cup final defeat, Rohit Sharma laid bare just how deeply the 50-over format is woven into his cricketing soul. Denied a place in India’s historic 2011 squad - an omission that would define his career - Rohit spent the next decade transforming himself into a modern ODI titan. When he finally got to lead the nation on home soil, he played with a fierce, selfless fury, only to fall one heartbreaking step short of the ultimate prize. He wanted another shot at redemption. That dream, however, seems to have been brought to a hard stop. The selectors have reportedly decided that the 39-year-old veteran simply does not



figure in their plans for the 2027 ODI World Cup. What has followed is a textbook weekend of Indian cricket chaos - a messy cocktail of conflicting public state-

ments, leaked selection secrets, and a legendary batsman caught in the crossfire. The bombshell news broke midway through the second ODI against England, and

the timing could not have been more bizarre. Just days earlier, at the start of the three-match series, ODI captain Shubman Gill had presented a united, respect-

ful front to the media. “Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have been the backbone of the Indian batting line-up for the past decade, and they remain an integral part of the team,” Gill had stated confidently. “The experience and skill they bring are obviously very valuable.” Yet, while the captain was publicising a seamless transition, Indian Cricket Board sources were painting a starkly different reality behind closed doors. The senior selection committee, alongside head coach Gautam Gambhir, had reportedly met with Rohit last week to deliver the cold truth: they are ready to “move on” and hand the reins to the next generation, specifically players like Yashasvi Jaiswal who have been waiting in the wings. “The selectors have informed Rohit that he does not figure in their scheme of things after the England tour,” a board source revealed to Indian Express. “

Kranti Gaud felicitated after scripting history in India’s memorable Lord’s Test victory

New Delhi: Madhya Pradesh Sports Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang on Thursday felicitated India fast bowler Kranti Gaud for her match-winning performance in the women’s team’s historic Test victory over England at Lord’s earlier this week. Gaud, who hails from Madhya Pradesh, was honoured at TT Nagar Stadium after playing a starring role in India’s emphatic 270-run win. The 21-year-old finished with a seven-wicket match haul, helping India secure their first-ever women’s Test victory at the iconic venue. The landmark performance also saw Gaud become the first Indian woman cricketer to have her name inscribed on the prestigious Lord’s Honours Board, marking another milestone in Indian women’s cricket. Congratulating the pacer, Sarang said Gaud had brought pride not only to Madhya Pradesh but to the entire country. “Her achievement is an inspiration for the state’s daughters and young athletes,” the minister



said. Highlighting the state government’s focus on sports development, Sarang said the Mohan Yadav-led administration was committed to nurturing sporting talent through better infrastructure, improved training facilities and greater opportunities for athletes. He added that children from rural areas were now making their mark at the national and international levels because of the expansion of sports facilities beyond urban centres. Speaking after the felicitation, Gaud described India’s victory at Lord’s as the biggest moment of her career.

“Being a part of India’s victory at Lord’s was the biggest moment of my life for me and my family,” she said. Gaud said she immediately video-called her family after seeing her name on the Lord’s Honours Board, sharing the historic moment with them. “It’s every cricketer’s dream to have their name enshrined on the Honours Board. As the first Indian woman cricketer to have my name enshrined there, I am honoured. This achievement belongs not only to me, but to my family, my coaches, Madhya Pradesh, and the entire country,” Gaud said.

New Zealand beat West Indies, take 2-1 lead in ODI series with victory

Providence: West Indies collapsed from 67-1 to be all out for 140, handing New Zealand a six-wicket win in the third one-day cricket international Thursday and a 2-1 lead in the five-match series. The collapse mirrored that of the second match in which the West Indies fell from 63-0 to 138 all out as New Zealand won by five wickets, leveling the series after losing the first match by seven wickets. New Zealand’s run chase was cautiously paced at 3.5 runs per over and ended in the 40th over at 141-4, with 63 balls remaining. Henry Nicholls made 24 and Will Young 23 in a solid partnership for the first wicket, Daryl Mitchell made 28 in the middle of the innings and Tom Latham and Dean Foxcroft saw New Zealand home in an unbroken partnership of 52 for the fifth wicket. Latham again was reliable, making 31 from 53 balls while Foxcroft made 22 from 28.



Left-arm wrist spinner Vitel Lawes put some pressure on the Kiwis with three early wickets but the target was too small to maintain that pressure. West Indies lost eight wickets in just over 20 overs in the face of excellent spin bowling from left-arm-er Jayden Lennox who took 4-52 to go with his 5-19 in the second match of the series. Mitchell Santner took 2-15 from 8.1 overs and Michael Bracewell 2-33 on another turning pitch at Providence Stadium. Lennox has been player of the match in the last two internationals.

All of his nine wickets have been bowled or lbw. “There’s obviously not secret to it, it’s keep the stumps in play,” Lennox said in a post-match television interview. “You have to let the pitch do what it does. We can’t control that but if we put the ball in the right area we’re obviously going to get some rewards.” Things began to go awry for West Indies when opener John Campbell was carried from the field on a stretcher in the sixth over after tearing a hamstring while running between wickets.

FIFA World Cup 2026 trophy arrives in bespoke Louis Vuitton trunk for New Jersey final showdown

New Jersey: The FIFA World Cup 2026 trophy will arrive at the New York-New Jersey Stadium inside a bespoke Louis Vuitton trunk, after the French luxury fashion house has been named the Official Supplier and Branded Licensee of the tournament. The specially designed trophy trunk will transport and showcase the coveted prize during the final, where it will be brought onto the pitch as part of the official ceremonies programme. The moment will continue a tradition that has become a signature feature of the World Cup since 2010, with a Louis Vuitton ambassador and a FIFA Legend presenting the trophy, according to a press release by FIFA. The trunk features the iconic Louis Vuitton monogram canvas, hand-painted golden “V” panels symbolising both “victory” and “Vuitton”, along with gold-plated brass fittings, leather trims, and classic locks.

The interior is lined with light beige leather and includes a special Louis Vuitton-FIFA partnership logo integrated into the lid. FIFA Chief Business Officer Romy Gai said Louis Vuitton’s craftsmanship and prestige make it a fitting partner for carrying football’s ultimate prize, while Louis Vuitton Chairman and CEO Pietro Beccari highlighted the shared values of excellence, ambition and inspiration between the two organisations. “Louis Vuitton brings a unique blend of heritage, craftsmanship and prestige to the FIFA World Cup,” said FIFA Chief Business Officer Romy Gai. “The Official Trophy is the most cov-



eted prize in world football and it is only fitting that it is carried in a Louis Vuitton trunk. The moment it is brought onto the pitch ahead of the final match will once again be a highlight, connecting tradition with the pinnacle of modern football,” he added. “For over a decade, Louis Vuitton and FIFA have shared an unwavering commitment to excellence, bound by a shared belief in sport’s power to inspire and bring people together,” said Louis Vuitton CEO & Chairman Pietro Beccari. “We are thrilled to continue this partnership for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

At its heart stands the world’s most coveted trophy - a symbol of dedication, collective ambition and the ultimate celebration of victory. For this new edition, the Louis Vuitton Trophy Trunk continues this legacy, accompanying the iconic moment when football’s greatest achievement is celebrated and history is made,” he added. Louis Vuitton’s partnership with FIFA dates back to 2010, with the brand previously creating trophy trunks for World Cup editions in South Africa, Brazil, Russia and Qatar under its iconic “Victory travels in Louis Vuitton” concept.

Rohit Sharma backed for Lord’s farewell century amid growing retirement speculation and talk

New Delhi: As speculation over Rohit Sharma’s ODI future continues to gather pace, former India wicket-keeper-batter Parthiv Patel believes the veteran opener is capable of producing one final masterpiece. With reports suggesting that Sunday’s series decider against England at Lord’s could be his last appearance in Indian colours, Patel backed the 39-year-old to answer his critics in trademark fashion. Questions over Rohit’s future have intensified after his struggles in the ongoing series. The former India captain managed scores of 11 and 26 in the first two ODIs, extending a lean run that has seen him score only 241 runs in his last eight matches.

The disappointing returns have fuelled speculation that India could soon begin planning for life after Rohit as preparations for the 2027 ODI World Cup gather pace. However, Patel believes Rohit’s recent struggles should not overshadow his ability to bounce back under pressure. “If the Lord’s ODI is indeed the last match of his career, Rohit Sharma would want to sign off with a century. He is more than capable of doing that. We’ve seen it throughout his career - after two or three low scores, he often bounces back with a match-winning knock in the very next innings,” Patel said while speaking on JioHotstar’s ‘Match Centre Live’. Patel argued that Rohit’s greatness lies in his ability to produce game-changing innings when his team needs them most. The opener remains one of the most accomplished ODI batters in history, with more than



11,000 runs and 33 centuries to his name, including a record three double hundreds. “The difference between Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma has always been consistency. Rohit may not score heavily in every game, but when he does, he plays a substantial innings and often ends up winning the Player of the Match award,” Patel said. Rohit’s struggles in the second ODI at Cardiff only intensified the scrutiny around him. The opener never looked settled at the crease and found it difficult to deal with the uneven bounce on offer. Patel, though, insisted that the veteran had repeatedly silenced his critics throughout his career and could do so again on one of cricket’s biggest stages. “He didn’t look comfortable in this game. He was troubled by the uneven bounce and never found his rhythm. But this is another opportunity for him to silence his critics. It has happened many times before, and he has always responded with the bat,” Patel added. If

Lord’s does indeed prove to be Rohit’s final ODI outing, Patel hopes the curtain comes down in memorable fashion. “So, if the Lord’s ODI is indeed his final match, I hope he plays an innings that people remember for a long time,” he added. Meanwhile, India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak dismissed concerns surrounding Rohit’s form, insisting that the captain was under no pressure despite his recent struggles and attributing his lack of runs to the challenging batting conditions. With the three-match series level at 1-1 following India’s four-wicket victory in Cardiff, all eyes will be on Rohit when India and England meet in the decider at Lord’s on Sunday, July 19. As Rohit Sharma’s ODI future is questioned amid a lean run, former India wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel expresses faith in the 39-year-old veteran’s ability to deliver a final match-winning innings. Despite recent struggles and speculation about retirement after the series decider against England at Lords, Pa-

tel highlights Rohit’s history of bouncing back under pressure and his exceptional career achievements. India’s batting coach also downplays concerns, attributing form issues to difficult conditions. The series is tied 1-1 ahead of the July 19 decider. Emerging from the painful, silent slumber that followed the heartbreaking 2023 World Cup final defeat, Rohit Sharma laid bare just how deeply the 50-over format is woven into his cricketing soul. Denied a place in India’s historic 2011 squad - an omission that would define his career - Rohit spent the next decade transforming himself into a modern ODI titan. When he finally got to lead the nation on home soil, he played with a fierce, selfless fury, only to fall one heartbreaking step short of the ultimate prize.

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Hockey India announces squad for FIH Hockey Women’s World Cup 2026 campaign ahead



New Delhi: The 20-member Indian Women’s Squad for the upcoming FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium and Netherlands 2026 was announced by Hockey India on Friday, with Salima Tete to lead the squad that Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne has described as a well-balanced group. The showpiece tournament, which will be hosted jointly by the Netherlands and Belgium, is scheduled to be held from 15 to 30 August, according to release. The squad, currently training at the national camp in Bengaluru, features a mix of experienced campaigners and promising young players, who impressed everyone during recent international assignments - most notably at the FIH Nations Cup in New Zealand last month, where the

team lifted the trophy and remained unbeaten. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam are the two goalkeepers named in the squad while the defense unit comprises Ishika Chaudhary, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Lalthantluangi, Jyoti and Shilpi Dabas. In the mid-field, captain Salima will be joined by Nikki Pradhan, Sakshi Rana, Sunelita Toppo, Neha and Deepika Soreng. The forward line features Lalremsiami, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal, Navneet Kaur, Deepika, Ishika, Baljeet Kaur and Beauty Dungleung, according to a release. Speaking about the selected squad, Chief Coach Marijne said, “We have chosen a well-balanced group of players who are ready for the big challenges we will face this summer. The team has

worked hard in the lead-up to the tournament and we are confident in this group’s abilities. We look forward to competing against the best teams in the world and showcasing our hockey on the biggest stage.” The Indian team has been drawn in Pool D, alongside China, England and South Africa. It will play all its pool-stage matches at the Wagener Hockey Stadium in Amstelveen, Netherlands, and open campaign against China on August 16, followed by matches against South Africa on August 18 and England on August 20. India’s 20-member squad for the FIH Hockey Women’s World Cup 2026 : Goalkeepers: Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam. Defenders: Ishika Chaudhary, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Lalthantluangi, Jyoti, Shilpi Dabas.