

Meghalaya achieves full SIR coverage, reaches 23.49 lakh electors

Shillong, July 31: The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Meghalaya has announced the successful completion of the state's Summary Revision (SIR) exercise, achieving 100 percent house-to-house coverage and reaching a total of 23.49 lakh electors. This milestone marks a significant step in strengthening electoral preparedness and ensuring inclusive participation in the democratic process. Officials confirmed that the exercise involved door-to-door verification across all districts, with electoral staff engaging directly with households to update voter rolls, verify

details, and include newly eligible electors. The comprehensive coverage ensures that every eligible citizen has been reached, reducing the risk of exclusion and enhancing transparency in the electoral system. The CEO highlighted that the achievement reflects the dedication of field officers, booth-level agents, and local administrators who worked tirelessly to complete the exercise within the stipulated timeframe. Special attention was given to remote and rural areas, ensuring that even the most inaccessible households were covered. Civil society groups and political repre-



sentatives have welcomed the announcement, noting that accurate and inclusive electoral rolls are the foundation of free and fair elections. They emphasized that

the exercise strengthens public trust in the electoral process and empowers citizens to exercise their democratic rights. Observers pointed out that Meghalaya's success in

achieving full coverage sets a benchmark for other states, demonstrating the effectiveness of systematic planning and grassroots engagement. The exercise also highlights the importance of technology and field coordination in modernizing electoral practices. The Election Department has assured that the updated rolls will be made available for public scrutiny, allowing citizens to verify their details and raise objections if necessary. Officials reiterated that transparency and accountability remain central to the process, with mechanisms in place to address grievances promptly.

Five-day Meghalaya Assembly session approved; Speaker assures fair time

Session calendar approved unanimously, including Opposition

Shillong, July 31: The Meghalaya Legislative Assembly's five-day Autumn Session will be held from August 24 to 28 after the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) unanimously approved the schedule on July 31, with Speaker Thomas A Sangma assuring legislators that members from both the treasury and opposition benches would have adequate opportunities to raise matters of public importance. The assurance came amid concerns over the limited duration of the session, which will comprise three days of government business and two days reserved for private members' business. "I will try



my best to accommodate all the members concerned and ensure that every member gets an opportunity to express their concerns on the floor of the House," the Speaker told reporters after the BAC meeting. The meeting was attended

by Deputy Chief Minister and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prestone Tynsong, Leader of the Opposition Mukul M. Sangma, Opposition Chief Whip Charles Pyngrope, Assembly Secretary Malthus S. Sangma and other members.

Tripura Finance Commission report guides governance till 2031

Agartala, July 31: The Sixth State Finance Commission (SFC) on Friday, July 31, submitted its report to Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, outlining recommendations aimed at strengthening fiscal decentralisation, improving local governance and enhancing the financial capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). The report was formally handed



over by Commission Chairman Abhishek Singh, IAS, along with Member Dr. Pallab Kanti Ghosal and Member Secretary Dr. Akinchan Sarkar, IAS. Constituted by the Tripura government on January 7, 2025, under Articles 243(I) and

243(Y) of the Constitution, the Sixth State Finance Commission was tasked with reviewing the financial position of local self-government institutions and recommending principles for the distribution of state financial resources among rural and urban local bodies and the TTAADC. The Commission also examined measures to improve the financial and administrative efficiency of these institutions to strengthen grassroots governance.

Konyak Union rejects Assam flood claims, cites mining

Kohima, July 31: The Konyak Union has strongly refuted claims from Assam authorities that recent floods in border areas were triggered by activities linked to the Dikhu dam and gold mining operations in Naginimora. The Union, representing the Konyak community in Nagaland, described the allegations as "misleading and unfounded," urging officials to refrain from attributing natural calamities to local projects without scientific evidence. In a statement, the Union emphasized that the floods were



the result of heavy rainfall and seasonal climatic conditions, not the outcome of dam operations or mining activ-

ities. Leaders noted that the Dikhu dam has been functioning within prescribed safety limits and that gold mining

in Naginimora is conducted under regulated frameworks. "The attempt to link our community's livelihood activities to the floods is unjust and irresponsible," the Union declared. "Such claims not only misrepresent the facts but also risk creating unnecessary tension between neighboring states." Community representatives stressed that the Konyak people have long relied on mining and agriculture for sustenance, and any effort to stigmatize these practices undermines their economic stability. They called for con-

structive dialogue between Assam and Nagaland authorities to address flood management collaboratively, rather than resorting to blame. Observers noted that the Union's rejection highlights broader concerns about inter-state relations and the need for evidence-based assessments of environmental issues. Experts have pointed out that floods in the region are recurrent due to monsoon patterns, deforestation, and inadequate drainage infrastructure, factors that extend beyond localized projects.

Delhi Police won't take adverse action against CJP protesters: Govt order

New Delhi, July 31: The Government of India has issued an order directing the Delhi Police not to take any adverse action against protesters associated with the Campaign for Judicial Protection (CJP). The directive comes amid ongoing demonstrations in the capital, where participants have been voicing concerns over judicial reforms and related policy matters. Officials clarified that the order is intended to safeguard democratic rights and ensure that peaceful protests are not met with punitive measures. The government emphasized that while law and order must be maintained, citizens have the consti-

tutional right to assemble and express their views. According to the order, the Delhi Police has been instructed to exercise restraint and avoid any action that could be perceived as harassment or suppression of legitimate protest. Senior officers confirmed that security arrangements remain in place to ensure public safety, but reiterated that protesters will not face adverse consequences for their participation. Civil society groups welcomed the directive, describing it as a positive step toward protecting democratic freedoms. Activists noted that the assurance provides confidence to citizens who wish to engage

in peaceful demonstrations without fear of reprisal. Political reactions have been mixed. Opposition leaders praised the order as a necessary safeguard for civil liberties, while some ruling party representatives cautioned that protests must remain within lawful limits and not disrupt public order. Observers highlighted that the government's decision reflects a balancing act between maintaining security and upholding democratic values. The move is expected to ease tensions between protesters and law enforcement, allowing dialogue to continue without confrontation. Authorities have appealed to demon-



strators to conduct their activities peacefully and responsibly, ensuring that the protests remain constructive. The government reiterated its commitment to engaging with stakeholders on judicial reform issues, while assuring that freedom of expression will be respected. The directive marks a significant moment in the ongoing debate over judicial accountability and public participation, reinforcing India's democratic ethos and the principle of non-violent dissent. The outcome of the ongoing protests may influence broader debates on judicial reforms and the role of public participation in shaping policy.

with constitutional principles. By explicitly prohibiting adverse action against protesters, the government has signaled its intent to strengthen trust between citizens and law enforcement agencies. Legal experts have observed that the order could set a precedent for handling similar demonstrations in the future. They argue that clear instructions from the government help prevent misuse of authority and reinforce the democratic ethos of non-violent dissent. The outcome of the ongoing protests may influence broader debates on judicial reforms and the role of public participation in shaping policy.

Security tightened in East Jaintia Hills ahead of Shree Cement public hearing today

Residents block MSPCB team; JSU says 4 JNC leaders picked up

Shillong, July 31: Authorities in East Jaintia Hills have intensified security arrangements ahead of the scheduled public hearing on Shree Cement's proposed expansion project. The hearing, set to take place today, has drawn widespread attention from local communities, civil society groups, and environmental activists. District officials confirmed that additional police personnel have been deployed across key locations, including the venue of the hearing and surrounding areas. Barricades, crowd-control measures, and monitoring units have been put in place to ensure that the proceedings remain peaceful and orderly. Senior officers emphasized that the security plan is designed to safeguard both participants and officials, while allowing free expression of public opinion. The public hearing is being conducted as part of the statutory environmental clearance process, which requires com-



panies to engage with local communities before undertaking major industrial projects. Shree Cement's proposal has sparked debate in the region, with supporters highlighting potential employment oppor-

tunities and economic growth, while opponents have raised concerns about environmental impact, land use, and community welfare. Civil society organizations have announced their intention to participate

actively in the hearing, stressing the importance of transparency and accountability in decision-making. Local leaders have urged residents to voice their concerns constructively, underscoring that the hearing

provides a democratic platform for dialogue between industry, government, and the public. Officials reiterated that the government is committed to balancing development with environmental sustainability. They assured that all views expressed during the hearing will be documented and forwarded to the relevant authorities for consideration in the clearance process. Observers noted that the heightened security reflects the sensitivity of the issue, given the potential implications for livelihoods, ecology, and industrial growth in East Jaintia Hills. The outcome of the hearing is expected to shape future discourse on industrial projects in Meghalaya and influence policy decisions regarding resource management in the region. Authorities have appealed to participants to maintain discipline and respect the democratic nature of the process, ensuring that the hearing proceeds without disruption.

Public hearing mandatory, not approval: Tynsong

Shillong, July 31: Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong has clarified that public hearings conducted for industrial and developmental projects are mandatory under environmental regulations, but they do not constitute automatic approval of the proposals. His statement comes amid heightened public debate surrounding upcoming hearings in the state, particularly those linked to cement and mining projects.

Tynsong emphasized that the purpose of a public hearing is to provide a democratic platform for local communities to voice their concerns, suggestions, and objections. He noted that while the hearings are an essential part of the statutory process, the final decision rests with regulatory authorities who evaluate all aspects, including environmental impact assessments, community feedback, and compliance with legal frameworks. "The hearing is compulsory, but it is not the final approval,"



Tynsong stated. "It is a step in the process where people's voices are recorded and considered before any decision is made." Officials explained that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the State Pollution Control Board are responsible for reviewing the outcomes of hearings. The feedback collected is documented and forwarded to expert committees, which then assess whether projects meet environmental and social standards. Civil society groups

welcomed the clarification, noting that it helps dispel misconceptions that public hearings automatically green-light projects. Activists stressed that communities must continue to participate actively, as their input can significantly influence the final outcome. Industry representatives acknowledged the importance of hearings but urged that the process be conducted fairly and transparently, ensuring that both development needs and environmental safeguards are balanced.

PM Modi Reviews Flood Crisis in Arunachal, Nagaland, Assures Full Central Support



Itanagar, July 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the worsening flood and landslide situation in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland at a high-level meeting with parliamentary representatives from the two northeastern states, assuring continued Central support for relief, rehabilitation and restoration efforts.

The meeting focused on the extensive disruption caused by persistent monsoon rainfall, flash floods and landslides, with particular attention to restoring damaged roads, bridges, electricity networks, water-supply systems and other essential infrastructure. Modi said the Centre would remain closely coordinated with the state governments to ensure assistance reaches communities affected by the disaster.

The Arunachal Pradesh delegation included Union

Minister Kiren Rijiju, Lok Sabha MP Tapir Gao and Rajya Sabha MP Tai Tagak. Nagaland was represented by Lok Sabha MP S. Supongmeren Jamir and Rajya Sabha MP S. Phangnon Konyak.

Arunachal Pradesh has experienced widespread rain-related damage during the monsoon, with the State Emergency Operation Centre reporting nearly 1.5 lakh people affected across all 27 districts. The continuing floods and landslides have claimed seven lives and injured 29 people, while also damaging roads, bridges, power infrastructure, homes and agricultural land.

The scale of infrastructure damage has complicated connectivity and the delivery of relief in several parts of the state. Earlier assessments recorded damage to hundreds of roads, bridges and culverts, along with

power lines, water-supply systems and public buildings, underscoring the need for sustained restoration work as the monsoon continues.

Nagaland has also faced severe rain-related disruption, particularly in Mon district, where multiple landslides struck Mon town after incessant rainfall. Four people were killed in the July 19 landslides, while several houses were washed away or damaged. Rescue and search operations were undertaken by district authorities, police, the State Disaster Response Force, Assam Rifles personnel and local volunteers.

The crisis has placed additional pressure on state administrations to maintain essential services while simultaneously clearing landslide debris, repairing damaged infrastructure and

reaching isolated communities.

The meeting comes amid forecasts of further heavy to very heavy rainfall across parts of the Northeast, raising concerns over fresh flooding and landslides in vulnerable areas. The India Meteorological Department has issued alerts for Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and neighbouring states as the monsoon remains active in the region.

The Prime Minister's assurance is expected to strengthen coordination between the Centre and the two state governments as relief and restoration operations continue. With several areas still vulnerable to additional rainfall-triggered incidents, authorities are prioritising emergency response, infrastructure recovery and assistance to affected families.

Assam Police Detect 21 Illegal Migrants as Government Steps Up Border Action

Guwahati, July 31: Assam Police have identified 21 foreign nationals allegedly staying illegally in the state, prompting administrative action as authorities continue efforts to check unauthorised cross-border movement, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday.

Sarma praised the state police for identifying the individuals and reiterated his government's firm position against illegal immigration. The announcement came after security personnel detected 18 foreign nationals allegedly attempting to cross the international border into India earlier in the day.

The latest action comes amid heightened attention on Assam's international border and the state government's continuing



efforts to identify and remove unauthorised foreign nationals.

Authorities have maintained that preventing illegal entry remains an important component of the state's security strategy.

The government has not publicly disclosed the loca-

tions where the 21 individuals were identified or provided detailed information on the administrative or legal action initiated against them.

The Assam government recently informed the state Legislative Assembly that nearly 2,100 foreign na-

tionals had been deported, expelled or pushed back across international borders during the past decade. The figures formed part of the government's broader account of measures undertaken to address illegal immigration in the state.

Assam shares an international border with Bangladesh, making cross-border migration a longstanding political, administrative and security issue. The state government has repeatedly stressed the need for stronger surveillance and enforcement along vulnerable stretches of the border.

The latest identification of suspected illegal migrants is expected to add to the government's ongoing efforts to strengthen border management and prevent unauthorised entry into the state.

Mizoram Teachers Call Off Strike Temporarily After Government Assures Talks

Aizawl, July 31: Teachers from more than 90 ad-hoc aided high schools in Mizoram have suspended their eight-day agitation after receiving an assurance from the state government that their concerns over a proposed education policy would be taken up for discussion.

The Mizoram Government Ad-Hoc Aided High School Teachers' Association (MIGAHTA) began its strike on July 21 to oppose the proposed Mizoram Education (Lumpsum Grants-in-Aid for General Maintenance of Pri-

ivate School) Rules, 2026. The teachers have argued that the draft rules could permanently downgrade the administrative status of ad-hoc aided schools.

The association has instead been demanding the complete provincialisation of the institutions, which would bring the schools under direct government control and provide greater administrative and employment security to teachers.

The decision to suspend the agitation followed a meeting between MIGAHTA representatives and Zoram

People's Movement (ZPM) vice-president Lalmuanpuia Punte. Party representatives assured the teachers that their concerns would be formally placed before the ZPM Political Affairs Committee (PAC) for consideration at its meeting scheduled for August 12.

Following the assurance, MIGAHTA directed its members to withdraw from ongoing sit-in demonstrations and return to regular teaching duties from August 3.

The association, however, said the suspension was conditional and did not amount

to a withdrawal of its demands.

Teachers warned that phased protests could resume if the government proceeds with administrative notifications implementing the proposed rules before their concerns are considered by the party's political affairs body.

The latest development has temporarily eased the stand-off between the teachers and the state authorities, while the proposed education rules and the demand for provincialisation remain at the centre of the dispute.

Retired Teacher Loses Life Savings in ATM Card-Swap Fraud in Assam

Guwahati, July 31: A retired primary school teacher in Assam's Golaghat district lost his savings after an unidentified fraudster allegedly swapped his debit card at an ATM kiosk and used the stolen card to make multiple unauthorised transactions.

The victim, identified as Gunaram Nath, had visited an ATM in Bokakhat to withdraw cash when he reportedly experienced difficulty operating the machine. An unidentified man inside the kiosk offered to help him with the transaction.

According to the complaint, the suspect watched Nath enter his personal identification number (PIN)

and later managed to exchange his genuine debit card with a duplicate card without his knowledge. Nath left the kiosk unaware that his original card had been taken.

The fraud came to light soon afterwards when Nath began receiving mobile banking alerts showing several withdrawals and point-of-sale transactions from his account. After checking his wallet, he discovered that the debit card in his possession was not his original card.

The retired teacher subsequently approached Bokakhat police station and lodged a complaint. Police registered a case and began

investigating the incident. Investigators are examining CCTV footage from the ATM kiosk and nearby establishments in an effort to establish the suspect's identity and trace his movements following the alleged card swap.

The incident has once again highlighted the risks posed by ATM card-swapping fraud, in which criminals exploit customers who require assistance at cash machines before obtaining their cards and PIN details. Police have advised ATM users to avoid accepting help from unknown individuals and to shield their PIN while entering it at cash machines.

ONGC Steps In to Restore Flood Damaged Schools Across Assam

ONGC's CSR initiative will fund repairs, restore learning facilities and replace educational materials damaged by floods, helping affected schools resume classes.

Guwahati, July 31: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has pledged financial and logistical assistance for the restoration of schools damaged by floods in Assam, as the state continues to deal with the impact of heavy monsoon rains, with more than 2.12 lakh people affected across eight districts and the flood-related death toll rising to 80.

The commitment was announced by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma after discussions with ONGC leadership. Under its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, the state-run energy major will support the restoration and rehabilitation of flood-hit educational institutions, including structural repairs and the replacement of essential learning materials. ONGC will particularly assist affected schools in Sivasagar and Charaideo, two of the districts that have suffered significant damage from the latest wave of flooding.

The intervention comes as Assam continues its recovery from widespread inundation. The latest flood situation report showed that more than 2.12 lakh people remained affected across eight districts, while two additional deaths in Sivasagar pushed the cumulative toll to 80. Charaideo has emerged as one of the worst-hit areas, with large numbers of residents continuing to face the effects of floodwaters.



Flooding has caused extensive disruption to public infrastructure, including schools, roads, bridges, embankments and other essential facilities. Agricultural land has also been submerged, with more than 17,000 hectares of crops reported to have been affected in the latest assessment. Relief and rehabilitation operations remain underway in the affected districts.

The damage to educational institutions has created an additional challenge for families in flood-hit communities. In several areas, school buildings have been inundated or damaged, while classroom furniture, textbooks and other teaching materials have been affected by prolonged exposure to floodwaters.

ONGC's intervention is expected to supplement the state government's restoration efforts by providing resources for repairs and the replacement of essential supplies. The support could help shorten the disruption to schooling and enable students to return to functional classrooms as conditions improve.

The Assam government has continued to coordinate rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures with multiple agencies. In earlier phases of the flooding, the Army, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force, Fire and Emergency Services and local volunteers were involved in rescue and relief operations across affected districts.

Although the overall flood situation has shown improvement in several areas compared with the peak of the latest wave, authorities remain alert as rivers continue to pose risks in vulnerable locations. Earlier reports indicated that the Dhansiri river at Numaligarh had remained above the danger level, while relief operations continued in some of the worst-affected parts of Upper Assam.

The continuing impact of the floods has also extended beyond immediate displacement. Damage to crops, livestock, houses and public infrastructure has added to the economic burden on affected communities, increasing the need for sustained rehabilitation after floodwaters recede.

Sarma welcomed ONGC's assistance and said corporate support would help accelerate the restoration of educational facilities. The initiative is expected to assist the government in re-opening damaged schools, replacing lost learning resources and reducing academic disruption for children in flood-affected communities.

The latest support also highlights the role of public-sector enterprises in disaster recovery, particularly in areas where repeated flooding leaves public infrastructure vulnerable to damage. With the monsoon still active, authorities are continuing to focus on relief delivery while preparing for further restoration work in affected districts.

Tripura Congress Raises Alarm Over Attacks on Party Workers

Agartala, July 31: Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee president Asish Kumar Saha has raised concern over alleged attacks and intimidation of opposition workers in the state, urging authorities to take prompt action against those responsible.

Speaking to reporters after an organisational review meeting at the North Tripura District Congress Bhavan in Dharmanagar, Saha condemned recent incidents of political violence and referred to an alleged assault on two Youth Congress workers in the area.

Saha said physical attacks and intimidation were incompatible with a constitutional democracy and called on the police and administration to act impartially. He urged law enforcement agencies to identify those responsible,



make arrests and ensure that legal proceedings are pursued.

The Congress leader also said the party would continue strengthening its organisational network across Tripura despite what he described as prevailing security concerns. He said party workers would maintain contact with people at the grassroots and raise issues affecting the public through peaceful democratic protests.

The review meeting as-

sessed the party's organisational activities in North Tripura and was attended by district Congress president Nirupam Dey, former district-level leaders and senior office-bearers of the TPCC executive committee.

Saha's remarks come amid the Congress' efforts to consolidate its organisational presence in the state and intensify public engagement on issues it considers important to the people of Tripura.

Over 2.12 lakh people are still affected as the Assam flood toll rises to 80

Guwahati, July 31: Even though the overall flood situation continued to improve and the number of affected individuals dropped to 2.12 lakh, officials reported on July 31 that the death toll from this year’s floods in Assam had increased to 80 after two more persons died in Sivasagar district.The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) reports that both deaths came from Sivasagar, where a youngster drowned in flooding during the previous twenty-four hours.2,12,400 people in eight districts—Golaghat, Sivasagar, Biswanath, Charaideo, Kamrup (Metropolitan), Jorhat, Dhemaji, and Nagaon—are still affected by floodwaters. There are still 437 communities and 21 revenue circles under water. Charaideo remains the worst-hit district, with nearly 80,000 people affected, followed by Sivasagar with around 71,000 and Jorhat with over 40,000. The number of affected people has declined from more than three lakh recorded earlier this week, indicating an improvement in the flood situation. The administration is operating 112 relief camps and relief distribution centres across four districts, where 75,583 displaced people are currently taking shelter. Rescue and relief operations are being carried out by the Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF),



State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Fire and Emergency Services, police and civil administration. According to authorities, roads, bridges, embankments, and other public infrastructure have been damaged in a number of regions, and 17,198.09 hectares of crops are still under water. At Numaligarh, the Dhansiri River is still flowing above the danger threshold.Nearly 2.97 lakh household animals and poultry have also been impacted by floods throughout the state.The administration gave flood-affected people 918.55 quintals of rice, 203.9 quintals of pulses, 146.7 quintals of salt, and 17,546.4 liters of mustard oil during the course of the previous day.According to the earlier ASDMA assessment, 7,099 dwellings

had partial damage and 1,517 had full damage. Two persons are still unaccounted for, while 29,987 people have been evacuated. Following a special meeting of the State Level Bankers’ Committee (SLBC), which was attended by representatives of the Reserve Bank of India, NABARD, State Bank of India, and other commercial banks, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced a six-month moratorium on loan repayments for borrowers affected by flooding in the districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat, and Golaghat.Additionally, he stated that depending on the type of loan, banks will be permitted to extend the terms of loans taken out by flood-affected customers by up to seven years.

In a cattle slaughter case, a Maharashtra court finds three people not guilty despite dubious evidence

New Delhi, July 31: In a 2018 livestock slaughter case, a judge in Alibag, Maharashtra, cleared three men, including one who passed away during the trial, stating that the evidence “created serious doubt.” Alibag residents Abdul Sayyad, Sharafat Faki, and Idris Chaudhary were charged in July 2018 under the Maharashtra Animal Preservation (Amendment) Act (MAPA), which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison. It claimed that the police raid in which 75 kg of “cow flesh” was purportedly seized was not in compliance with statutory provisions and suffered from legal infirmity. While the trial was ongoing,

Faki passed away, and Sayyad and Chaudhary were freed on bond. Chief Judicial Magistrate DM Zate pointed out significant inconsistencies in the prosecution witnesses’ testimony on how the seized meat samples were collected.

According to the court’s ruling on Wednesday, the raid violated the MAPA’s required clauses.When police raided the accused’s homes, they reportedly found 75 kg of “cattle” meat, six knives—two of which had sharp edges—plastic sheets, and scales. The Forensic Sciences Laboratory had verified that the samples taken were “cow flesh,” the prosecution informed

the court. The police questioned five witnesses, none of whom were independent, according to defense attorneys Amin Solkar and Umang Shah. They claimed that because one of the witnesses was a member of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, his testimony was untrustworthy. The prosecution claimed that there was insufficient justification for rejecting his testimony.The defense noted that although the police claimed the samples were taken from the accused’s homes, a veterinarian informed the court that he examined the samples at a police station. The quantity of boxes used to collect the samples varied among witnesses as well.

HYC calls for the resignation of VC, the head of NEHU, and warns increased agitation

Shillong, July 31: On Thursday, the Hynniewtrep Youths’ Council (HYC) threatened to escalate its protests regarding the appointment of Professor Saroj Kanta Barik as In-charge Vice-Chancellor of North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU). They demanded that Barik resign on moral grounds and claimed that the university’s most senior and qualified professor was disregarded in violation of the institution’s legal requirements. The group sent a memo requesting the resignation of the In-charge Vice-Chancellor and staged a silent demonstration outside his office. In compliance with the NEHU Statutes, it also asked that the responsible authority assign the Vice-Chancellor’s responsibility to the most senior professor. HYC leaders said Professor Barik was not present during the

protest as he had travelled to Kolkata and that they had sought an appointment with him on Monday. Warning of an escalation of its protest, the organisation stated, “Failing which, we will be compelled to take other courses of action to ensure that our demands are fulfilled in the interests of our community and the university as a whole.” ”The appointment is illegitimate,” HYC Education Secretary Enlang Sawian claimed in an interview with reporters. The NEHU Act and Regulations’ statutory provisions have been broken. The council has come to protest because of this, and if the issue is not resolved or our demand is not fulfilled, the council will be forced to take action and force the incumbent VC to resign from his position.””Based on this issue, we have submitted a formal represen-



tation to the office of the In-charge Vice-Chancellor of NEHU,” Sawian stated, referring to the note that was submitted to the institution. However, we have requested an appointment for Monday because the VC has traveled to Kolkata. We have a very clear demand: the VC currently holding the position should step down. Our demand is valid and does not target anyone.The HYC expressed concern in its memo regarding Pro-

A five-day Meghalaya Assembly session is approved; the speaker guarantees time for each member

Shillong, July 31: The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) unanimously approved the schedule for the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly’s five-day Autumn Session on July 31. Speaker Thomas A. Sangma assured lawmakers that members of the opposition and treasury benches would have sufficient opportunities to bring up issues of public concern. Concerns about the session’s short duration—three days of government business and two days set up for private members’ business—were raised by the assurance. Following the BAC meeting, the Speaker told reporters, “I will try my best to accommodate all the members concerned and ensure that every member gets an opportunity to express their concerns on the floor of the House.” The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prestone Tynsong, Leader of the Opposition Mukul M. Sangma, Opposition Chief Whip Charles Pyngrope, Assembly Secretary Malthus S. Sangma and other members. The session will begin on August 24 with



the presentation of the Business Advisory Committee report, laying of ordinances, notifications, reports and rules, introduction of government bills, presentation of the Supplementary Demands for Grants and Supplementary Appropriation for 2026-27, and obituary references.August 25 and August 27 have been earmarked for private members’ business, including bills, motions and resolutions. On August 26, the government will vote on the Sup-

plementary Demands for Grants. On the last day of the session, the Meghalaya Appropriation (No. III) Bill, 2026 will be introduced and passed, government bills will be considered and passed, and prorogation or adjournment sine die will follow.All members of the Business Advisory Committee, including those from the Opposition, unanimously supported the schedule of sessions, according to the Speaker.

Raghav Chadha says his role has changed after a protracted silence on the NEET issue



New Delhi, July 31: He spoke up in Parliament about everything from the cost of airport chai samosas to the issues facing gig workers. However, when thousands of young people protested the NEET paper leak in Delhi’s streets, the young neta became completely silent.And others sensed the quiet. Many people ridiculed it on social media and voiced harsh criticism. During his intervention in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, BJP MP Raghav

Chadha responded to criticism for his “radio silence” regarding the student protests.Finally speaking out on the NEET issue, the former AAP leader-turned-BJP MP is well-known for bringing up concerns pertaining to students, the middle class, education, and gig workers.The youthful leader claimed that his job changed as a result of his recent political transfer from the AAP to the BJP. ”It was my responsibility to raise questions while I was in the opposition, and I did it in an honest manner. My role has altered now that I am on the Treasury Benches. Speaking during the Rajya Sabha debate on the new law against paper leaks, he stated, “My responsibility is no longer to ask questions but to provide solutions.”Chadha went on to say that he wanted outcomes rather than headlines or to “mark attendance” by speaking in front of cameras.I had promised myself that I would only bring up the issue in Parliament when we were able

to find a solution and the system was being fixed. He added, “And today is that historic day when the system is being fixed.” ”Just as cancer cannot be treated with Crocin, the paper leak menace cannot be controlled by mere soundbites,” Chadha added, applauding the government’s move to enact a stronger law against paper leaks. Our government has started the institutional reform that we need.

Additionally, Chadha praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for meeting the aspirations of the students.Every NEET kid who watches this should know that their complaints about the system are sincere, their anguish is real, and their fury is warranted. The Hon’ble Prime Minister listened to your concerns, not just in his capacity as PM but also in his capacity as a guardian, much like a family head would.”The government responded to student demands, and historic decisions were made,” he stated.

Sambhal removes potholes from the 130-kilometer Kanwar path so that Kanwars can go barefoot

New Delhi, July 31: In addition to deploying over 2,000 police officers and a vast surveillance network under a “zero-error” security plan, the Sambhal administration announced on Friday that the district had made over 130 km of Kanwar routes pothole-free to ensure barefoot pilgrims do not face inconvenience during the annual pilgrimage. Shrawan, the holy month dedicated to Lord Shiva, started on Thursday, marking the beginning of the Kanwar Yatra. The Public Works Department has repaired and made the 130.33-km Kanwar route completely pothole-free, according to district authorities. The power department has wrapped 1,775 electricity poles, barricaded 233 transformers, tightened loose overhead wires at 225 locations, and corrected 37 leaning poles to prevent electrocution. District Magistrate Ankit Khandelwal said the administration had implemented a “zero-error” action plan to ensure a safe, hassle-free and incident-free pilgrimage.”For the convenience of Shiva devotees, 130.33 km of Kanwar routes have been made pothole-free and electrical infrastructure has been secured.

Security is being maintained through 12,456 CCTV cameras, an Integrated Command and Control Centre and deployment of 2,017 police personnel across the district,” he said. The district has been divided into five security zones, with surveillance being carried out through 12,456 CCTV cameras linked to an Integrated Command and Control Centre.Authorities

have deployed nine special magistrates on major Kanwar routes, besides shift-wise magistrates across all 17 police station areas and at major temples.

Five circle officers, 34 station house officers and inspectors, 144 sub-inspectors, 144 constables, staff at 77 pickets and barriers, specialized police help centers, rooftop surveillance teams, and extra security at significant temples and Ganga ghats are all part of the police deployment. Additionally, flood units from the Provincial Armed Constabulary have been stationed at river ghats.In addition to emergency response plans that include 18 UP-112 vehicles, public address systems, watchtowers, and cranes at strategic sites, the government has designated 19 traffic diversion spots around the district. Major thoroughfares, Shiva temples, and the five ghats along the Ganga (Rajghat, Sankara Ghat, Sadhumani Ghat, Asadpur Ghat, and Hari Baba Bandh Ghat) have special medical teams stationed there. Additionally, 102 and 108 ambulance services are kept on call around-the-clock. In an effort to keep the administration’s record of no drowning accidents over the previous five years, divers have also been stationed at five significant Ganga ghats. Strict surveillance of hotels and restaurants along the Kanwar roads is also being conducted, according to officials. Rate lists must be displayed, and food establishments must be inspected. They stated that emergency and fire services have also been bolstered for the trek.

Near KRS Dam, Kannada farmers and groups demonstrate against the new water regulations

New Delhi, July 31: On Friday, farmers and Kannada organizations protested against the Cauvery Water Management Authority’s (CWMA) order to transfer water to Tamil Nadu near the KRS reservoir in this area, despite the police deploying about 1,500 people under strong security measures. The suggestion of the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee to provide Tamil Nadu with 3,500 cusecs of water per day for 15 days was upheld by the CWMA. Karnataka’s claim that the region receives little rainfall during the monsoon and that the state is experiencing a severe drought was not taken into account by the CWMA.On August 2, DK Shivakumar, the chief minister of Karnataka, has called an all-party meeting. Members of the Kannada Rakshana Vedike were among the demonstrators who con-

gregated close to the reservoir. Some female protestors symbolically ate grass to show their disapproval of the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) and the CWMA.As a symbolic act of protest, some demonstrators—including women—were observed rolling on the road.Additionally, they carried posters with a cross over the image of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay. As police broke up the rally, a number of demonstrators were placed under preventive arrest.A demonstrator claimed that Karnataka was experiencing “injustice time and again” and declared, “The Authority has signed a death warrant for our farmers. Under no circumstances should this be accepted.” Appealing to Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar to take a firm stand, the protester said, “The entire Kannada



community stands with you. You have called an all-party meeting. Leaders of all parties, forgetting caste and religion, will stand with you,” the protester urged the chief minister not to release water. Additionally, he urged Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay to comprehend the situation on the ground before requesting water from Karnataka.”This must stop,” he declared, urging a more vigorous legal battle. The Supreme Court must hear a proper case.In anticipation of protests, Mandya Super-

intendent of Police Shobha Rani V J stated that extensive security measures had been put in place throughout the district.Together with personnel and striking forces, two SPs, an Additional SP, nine DYSPs, 28 Circle Inspectors/Inspectors, 46 PSIs, and 59 ASIs have been deployed. Eight units of the District Armed Reserve (DAR) and ten companies of the Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) have been deployed. There are about 1,500 employees on duty overall, she stated.

The SP said personnel from other districts had also been deployed, barricades had been erected at sensitive locations and public entry to the Brindavan Gardens had been prohibited for the day. Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and his Tamil Nadu counterpart Vijay are likely to meet on August 3. It’s still unclear if Vijay and Shivakumar will meet in person in Karnataka or virtually.Shivakumar has even extended an invitation to Vijay to travel to the Cauvery valley so he may personally witness the truth on the ground.In the meantime, farmers in Tamil Nadu who are against Chief Minister Vijay traveling to Karnataka have asked that if he does, he should accompany D K Shivakumar, his counterpart from Karnataka, to the damaged paddy growing area in Tamil Nadu’s Cauvery Delta.

POCSO FIR Quashed by Meghalaya High Court After Married Couple Found Raising Child

Shillong, July 31: According to officials on Thursday, the Meghalaya High Court dismissed criminal proceedings under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act against a 27-year-old man after considering that he had married the survivor. The couple had been living together for a number of years and were raising their four-year-old daughter. The accused and the survivor filed a joint plea to have a FIR lodged at the Ri-Bhoi Women Police Station in 2021 and the ensuing procedures before the Special Judge (POCSO), Ri-Bhoi, quashed. This motion was granted by a division bench. The petition claims that the FIR was filed when the girl was pregnant and underage. She decided to live with the accused after reaching adulthood, and in March of this year, the couple married in front of the Marriage Registrar in Nongpoh.The High Court Legal Services Committee Secretary’s report, which verified the couple’s cohabitation with their daughter, was also taken into consideration by the court.According to the newspaper, the woman had dropped out of a Laboratory Technology diploma program due to the ongoing criminal investigation. She expressed her desire to resume her studies or pursue a law degree and also showed interest in vocational training in tailoring. According to the report, she willingly declared that she did not oppose to the quashing of the criminal charges against her husband.The High Court cited its previous ruling in Shalenbor Wahtang v. State of Meghalaya, which acknowledged that consensual teenage relationships are frequent in the state and that courts must take extraordinary circumstances into account when making decisions in such cases, in order to set aside the case.The bench said that even if violations of the POCSO Act are regarded as crimes against society, social realities cannot be entirely separated from judicial decisions. It stated that sending the spouse to prison could have a negative impact on the child’s welfare as well as the survivor in cases where the couple is legally married or cohabiting.

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Dousing the flames of discontent



India’s approach to fire safety is dangerously reactive even though fire accidents account for 13,000-15,000 lives every year, according to the National Crime Records Bureau. Each major blaze still follows a grimly familiar script: tragedy, outrage, compensation, perfunctory inspections and eventual institutional amnesia. Investigations repeatedly show that buildings either lacked valid no-objection certificates or allowed safety systems to lapse after receiving approval. Safety certifications are often viewed as one-time permissions instead of continuously enforceable obligations. Enforcement agencies remain understaffed and municipal oversight is fragmented across departments. Electrical failures are the leading cause of urban fires. Besides overloaded circuits, poor wiring and substandard equipment, the growing dependence on air-conditioning, generators, charging infrastructure and dense appliance usage have intensified fire risks. Yet inspections frequently ignore electrical resilience. Moreover, cities are growing faster than emergency response can adapt to. Narrow roads delay fire engines and high-rise towers emerge more rapidly than firefighting infrastructure still catering to a low-rise urban past. Climate conditions are worsening the challenge. Rising temperatures, prolonged heat waves and increasingly dry urban environments heighten the probability of electrical overheating and rapid fire spread. Waste accumulation, chemical storage and combustible synthetic interiors further magnify risk. Countries that have reduced fire-related deaths effectively did so through institutional cultures built around prevention and enforcement. Japan integrated rigorous evacuation drills and stringent building standards into civic life. Singapore institutionalised mandatory inspections and strict enforcement in dense urban environments. Across the West, sprinkler systems, smoke compartmentalisation and emergency-exit redundancy are embedded into building codes and backed by strong legal liability.

The National Building Code of India already has extensive provisions on evacuation routes, fire-re-

sistant materials, emergency lighting and high-rise safety. The problem is that the political economy of Indian urbanisation often incentivises lack of accountability. Builders minimise costs, resident associations postpone maintenance, commercial establishments exceed occupancy limits, local authorities regularise violations retrospectively. Fire departments themselves suffer from manpower shortages, outdated equipment and inadequate autonomy. The burden of this falls disproportionately upon the vulnerable. Hospital fires endanger immobile patients. Coaching centres trap young people in overcrowded spaces. Informal workers face especially high mortality because of unsafe exits and hazardous storage conditions. Lower-income communities remain disproportionately exposed. Fire safety is thus a question of social justice and responsibility. Public awareness remains alarmingly weak. Many are unfamiliar with evacuation procedures, misuse elevators during fires or ignore blocked exits and malfunctioning alarms. Safety drills remain rare. Residential staircases become storage areas, fire doors remain locked or permanently open. Several recent disasters have shown that confusion and panic, as much as flames themselves, become fatal.

India urgently needs a prevention-centred fire governance framework. Fire-safety compliance should be digitally trackable and publicly accessible. Every high-rise, hospital, school, mall and commercial establishment must disclose inspection status, audit dates and certification validity in real time. Periodic third-party safety audits should be mandatory. Urban local bodies must incorporate fire-risk mapping into city planning. Most importantly, enforcement should be politically non-negotiable. Fire departments require autonomy, modern equipment and staffing levels proportionate to urbanisation. Insurance premiums should be linked to compliance standards, creating financial incentives for safety investments. Schools, offices and residential societies must institutionalise evacuation drills as a routine civic practice. Fire safety is ultimately a test of governance itself.

Trump’s high-stakes gamble: why half-measures in Iran won’t work

Entering the sixth month of the war with Iran, the United States keeps issuing contradictory statements. President Donald Trump’s constant modification of claims and objectives, have perpetuated the confusion. While the final outcome is yet unclear, many factors that will condition it are visible.

The war began, with the US and Israel launching extensive air attacks on Iranian military facilities on February 28. More significantly, they also killed the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. President Trump promptly claimed that Iran stood “totally defeated and wants a deal”. The military campaign, he added, would last for two to three weeks. The aggressors completely underestimated the Iranian resilience and military preparedness. Iran demonstrated the ability to both bear the consequences of the massive airstrikes, but, more importantly, to retaliate, using drones and missiles. Having learnt from the US and Israeli attacks in June 2025, it had protectively located its military assets deep inside its extensive mountain ranges. It emerged later that the operation was launched after White House briefings by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his team. They argued that after the supreme leader’s assassination, the killing of Army commanders and the rapid destruction of missile launch sites, the entire population of Iran would rise up in revolt against the Islamic regime. There were dissent-

ing voices on the US side, but once President Trump gave his approval, the debate ended. Reportedly, US vice-president J.D. Vance is said to have berated the Israeli Prime Minister for misleading the Americans.

As the war proceeded, the scenario got more complicated. The regime change claim was dropped even before the original June 17 ceasefire. In fact, President Trump strongly denied the US ever desired it. Iranian counter-strikes, using drones and missiles, targeted US military facilities in the Gulf countries, where important American bases operated. Iran also decided to shut down maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, of which it controls the entire northern periphery. Almost 20 per cent of the global oil production transits through this strait. Consequently, the price of Brent crude spiked past \$100 per barrel, reaching a peak of \$126 per barrel, as global inventories depleted at historic rates between February and May. The US apparently had not expected Iran to use the Hormuz Strait as a retaliatory pressure point. This disruption of global oil supply also hit the US consumers with higher energy costs. The Trump administration now realises that with crucial midterm elections due at the beginning of November, the Iran crisis needed an early resolution. In fact, US House Speaker Mike Johnson, a strong Trump supporter, demanded that “we got to wrap it up”.

Generally, any war tapers off because of one of

two reasons. One, a victor emerges and enforces the terms of submission. Two, both sides reach a point of exhaustion as a stalemate emerges. The second has been happening in the Ukraine war, but the Russian ego, especially of President Vladimir Putin, disallows a compromise. In the case of the Iran dispute, the US faces a similarly evolving scenario. Although the American Jewish lobby, alongside the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, wants the war escalated, polls indicate declining support for Israel even amongst the American Jewish community. Also, the latest Reuters-Ipsos poll indicates that only one in three Americans supports the US participation in the Iran war. Meanwhile, Iran threatens to destroy the infrastructure of the GCC nations, if attacks on Iranian facilities are expanded. Thus, despite the US threats of general annihilation of Iran, the Iranians calculate that the US cannot escalate attacks beyond a limit. It also knows that it cannot deploy ground troops because the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) are prepared for a strong fight-back. There are also reports that the US is running low on munitions and anti-missile interceptors. Of course, President Trump has publicly denied this. The US resumed hostilities on July 8, after more than three weeks of the June 17 ceasefire. This ceasefire breakdown has been attributed to the vagueness of the Memorandum of Understanding. As the US lifted their naval blockade Iran was supposed



to allow free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Instead, Iran began to collect fees from transiting vessels. When tankers or other freighters began using the Omani side of the strait, they were attacked by Iranian missiles.

Once the US airstrikes resumed, Iran too began retaliatory attacks, beginning with US military facilities in Jordan. There was always an indirect link between the Ukraine and Iran wars. Iran had been supplying drones to Russia for use and Ukraine had similarly transferred anti-drone munitions to the Gulf countries. A more direct link occurred when Ukraine attacked an Iranian vessel in the Caspian Sea. It was thus more than coincidental that President Donald Trump received in the White House on July 28 Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and the Israeli Prime Min-

ister Benjamin Netanyahu. The Israeli leader was on his seventh visit to the US during President Trump’s current term. Terming his meeting with the US President as “excellent”, he added that it was a “conversation of full partnership... with an understanding of shared goals”. Denying Iran access to nuclear weapons was noted as the main goal. Mr Netanyahu needed to project bonhomie and continuing US support as the polls show him trailing in the parliamentary elections due at the end of October. America’s Gulf policy thus faces a serious dilemma. Mere air attacks are not intimidating Iran or eliminating its retaliatory capacity to disrupt maritime traffic through the Hormuz Strait. A comprehensive invasion with ground and air resources combined, with Kurds or Baluchis from neighbouring nations, carries a high risk

of protracted conflict, loss of US troops and destruction of GCC economies and societies. Alternatively, a compromise involves allowing Iran joint control with Oman over the Strait. Omani diplomats were in Iran on July 25-26.

That leaves the nuclear issue. On July 22 a US-Saudi civilian nuclear deal was announced, reportedly allowing uranium enrichment for providing fuel for its planned reactors. It further complicates the issue. Iran now would not settle for less than that. Even the UAE would want its 2009 nuclear deal similarly upgraded. Finally, the US can still persist with the status quo. It can maintain pressure on Iran through its naval blockade and await Iranian economic pain to force Tehran to compromise. But till then global economies face higher energy costs and even trade disruption.

Lessons for Indian higher ed from Qatar and the UAE

When the United Kingdom’s famed King’s College decided recently to enter India, its choice fell on an institution in the United Arab Emirates to start the process. Delhi’s two leading English language newspapers carried full-page advertisements on the outer jacket cover seeking local partners to collaborate with the institution in the UAE to take the process forward. It was a stinging indictment of India’s education infrastructure that when the deal was finalised, it was announced in Dubai and the agreement to set up the Gurugram campus was signed at a plush 7-star hotel in Dubai and not in New Delhi, a stone’s throw from Gurugram in the National Capital Territory (NCT).

The UAE, a young country, got its first graduates only in the early 1980s when the first Emiratis enrolled for higher education in the UK, the United States, or Egypt. The UAE’s founding father and first President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, gave top priority to education and was determined that his young citizens especially women should get the best education although there were no colleges or even that many schools in the country. Sheikh Zayed studied in a madrasa, but the UAE Cabinet today has at least half a dozen ministers with PhDs from reputed universities across the world. Six of the fully qualified 28-member Cabinet are women. That is just the preface to an inspiring story of dedication to excellence in education, which India could learn from. If only because it is relevant these days as every aspirational household in India discussed education in the wake of the Cockroach Janata Party’s headline-grabbing agitation about failings in learning. As a journalist who lived in the Gulf and watched this story unfold, this author reflected and reminisced last fortnight as students and recent graduates across India were, instead, subjected to what are now acknowledged as police excesses simply because they were fighting for an education which had some semblance of quality, fairness, and integrity.

The UAE’s growth as an unlikely hub of higher education in the middle of the Arab desert is by no means an exception. Doha, the capital of Qatar, has what has been designated as an ‘Education City’ within it. This academic enclave’s driving force was a Sheikha, the favourite wife of Qatar’s then Amir when she embarked on an enterprise to bring the best education in the world to Doha. Sheikha Moza’s roots are local, belonging to Al Hawajir Bedouin tribe. Her father was imprisoned and later sent into exile for political agitations against the then Amir, Ahmed bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani. It was only nine years after she married Qatar’s heir apparent, that she enrolled in the newly-established Qatar University to get her graduate



degree. Her passion for educating young Qataris was such that she prioritised what many of India’s education ministers have sadly not comprehended.

When Manmohan Singh was prime minister, the one-time academic was determined that India’s education was in dire need of reform. He tried to bring foreign universities to India to make up for the deficiencies of domestic institutions and provide more opportunities for aspirational Indian youth. The policy met with resistance from India’s entrenched academic business and from bureaucrats both in the Centre and in the states. The most notorious instance was that of T P Sreenivasan, a retired diplomat who was appointed Vice Chairman and Executive Head of Kerala’s Council for Higher Education. When Sreenivasan initiated steps to reform the state’s education apparatus, he was beaten up one day when he appeared at a public function by Leftist students, who were against foreign universities coming to Kerala. All three of Singh’s education ministers fell flat on their faces trying to reform the system, especially in bringing foreign universities into India. When this author was a foreign correspondent in the United States, heads of several institutions of higher learning there narrated tales of woe in their attempts to

break into India’s academic scene. Since then, it has been a story of fits and starts and only faint traces of success. The only constant change was in renaming the ministry of education eight times since 1947. It was then that Gulf countries spotted golden chances to attract foreign institutions to fill a void in their school and college facilities. Today, Qatar’s Education City houses Ivy League colleges and other universities in their 12-sq.km campus. A university town called Dubai International Academic City has 27 foreign colleges and three innovation centres with a current enrolment of 27,500 students, many of them from South Asia. After Canada and the US restricted foreign students, these campuses have become more popular among Indian students seeking foreign education. As in many fields in the Gulf, the war which began on February 28 has raised question marks about the future of these campuses. Academics told this author that they are keeping fingers crossed about enrolment in the next academic year if there is no solution to the Iran crisis. That presents a resurrected opportunity for India to attract these universities, which wanted to go to India in the first place. The reasons underlying the Cockroach Janata Party’s agitation do not inspire confidence that such an effort will succeed.

Amazon to Pass Part of \$600 Million Tariff Refunds to Customers



New Delhi: Amazon received around \$600 million in tariff refunds during the second quarter and plans to return part of the amount to customers who were directly charged import-related fees on eligible purchases. Chief Financial Officer Brian Olsavsky said during the company's quarterly earnings call that Amazon was participating in the federal refund process following a US Supreme Court ruling that invalidated

certain tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. The company will reimburse customers where it can clearly establish that tariff costs were passed on to them. Amazon's overall refund was relatively limited as it was not the importer of record for most products sold on its platform. A significant share of imported goods is handled by third-party sellers, who are

responsible for seeking tariff recoveries through the government's refund mechanism. Amazon had also absorbed some tariff-related costs instead of passing them on to consumers. The refunds follow the US government's efforts to return billions of dollars in duties collected under tariffs that were later invalidated. Companies across retail, manufacturing and technology sectors have sought reimbursements under the mechanism. The announcement came alongside stronger-than-expected second-quarter results, with Amazon reporting revenue of \$200.6 billion and accelerated growth in its cloud-computing business.

MV Electrosystems IPO Draws Strong Demand on Day 2 as GMP Climbs



New Delhi: MV Electrosystems' ₹290-crore initial public offering continued to attract strong investor interest on the second day of bidding on Friday, with subscription levels rising sharply and the grey market premium strengthening, signalling positive sentiment ahead of the issue's August 3 closing date. The mainboard IPO, which opened on July 30, has a price band of ₹400 to ₹425 per share and comprises entirely a fresh issue, with no offer-for-sale component. The company plans to use the proceeds for long-term working capital needs, research and development of new power-electronics equipment and general corporate purposes. By the second day of bid-

ding, the issue had been subscribed around 3.64 times, according to market data, while the grey market premium had risen to about ₹125 per share from ₹105 a day earlier. At the upper end of the ₹425 price band, the premium indicated a potential listing gain of roughly 29-30 per cent, although grey market indications are unofficial and do not guarantee listing performance.

The company is seeking to raise capital as it expands its operations in railway electrification and power electronics. The issue comprises up to 68.23 lakh equity shares and is scheduled to close on August 3. Allotment is expected on August 4, with the shares likely to list on the NSE and BSE on August 6. MV Electrosystems designs and manufactures electrical

and power-electronics systems used in railway rolling stock. Its business is positioned to benefit from continued investment in railway modernisation, electrification and related infrastructure. A key attraction for investors is the company's order pipeline. Its executable order book stood at about ₹921.64 crore as of June 2026, providing visibility for future revenue generation. The company's strategic supplier relationship with Indian Railways has also been highlighted as an important business strength. However, the strong subscription and rising GMP do not eliminate the risks associated with the issue. Investors have been cautioned about

customer concentration, financial volatility and the company's dependence on the execution of its order book. The issue's entirely fresh structure means the capital raised will flow into the company rather than providing an exit for existing shareholders. At the upper price band, the minimum retail application for 34 shares requires an investment of ₹14,450. With bidding continuing until August 3, investor interest in the IPO is likely to remain closely tied to subscription trends and the movement in its unofficial grey market premium. However, the GMP remains an informal market indicator and should not be treated as a reliable measure of the eventual listing price.

Rs 15 Lakh Income, Different Tax Outcomes: Salary Earners Face Higher Outgo

New Delhi: A ₹15 lakh annual income can result in markedly different tax liabilities in India depending on whether the money is earned as salary, professional fees or business receipts, highlighting how deductions and presumptive taxation can significantly alter the final tax burden. Under the new tax regime applicable for assessment year 2026-27, a salaried individual earning ₹15 lakh can claim a standard deduction of ₹75,000, leaving taxable income of ₹14.25 lakh. Based on the applicable slab rates, the income-tax liability works out to ₹93,750, which rises to ₹97,500 after the four per cent health and education cess. The rebate under Section 87A is available only where taxable income does not exceed ₹12 lakh. The comparison changes considerably for professionals eligible for presumptive taxation. Under Section 44ADA, eligible professionals can declare 50 per cent of gross receipts as taxable professional income. On gross receipts of ₹15 lakh, this would mean deemed taxable income of ₹7.5 lakh, which falls below the ₹12 lakh rebate threshold under the new regime for eligible



resident taxpayers, potentially resulting in no income-tax liability, subject to applicable conditions. Small business owners using the presumptive taxation framework under Section 44AD can also have a substantially lower taxable income than their gross turnover. Where eligible digital receipts qualify for the six per cent presumptive rate, ₹15 lakh of turnover would translate into deemed business income of ₹90,000. The actual tax position, however, depends on eligibility and the nature and composition of the business receipts. Income from property can similarly receive deduc-

tions that reduce taxable income. For a house-property owner, the tax system allows a standard deduction of 30 per cent of annual value under the applicable provisions, although the final liability depends on the total income, type of property, other income and applicable rules. The differences do not necessarily mean that the tax system imposes a higher rate simply because an individual is salaried. Rather, the disparity arises because business and professional taxation recognises the costs and risks associated with generating income through those activities, while salaried

taxpayers generally have fewer deductions available under the default new regime. The comparison also underscores the importance of distinguishing gross receipts, gross salary, taxable income and turnover when discussing tax burdens. A ₹15 lakh salary cannot be directly equated with ₹15 lakh of business turnover or professional receipts because the tax treatment and permissible deductions differ substantially. The latest tax structure has further widened the relevance of the rebate threshold. From assessment year 2026-27, the Section 87A rebate under the new re-

gime was increased to a maximum of ₹60,000 for resident individuals whose taxable income does not exceed ₹12 lakh. The revised slabs begin with no tax up to ₹4 lakh, followed by rates of five per cent, 10 per cent and 15 per cent across successive income bands. For middle-class households, the distinction is particularly significant because salaried income is generally more straightforward to tax, with tax deducted at source by employers and comparatively limited scope for reducing taxable income under the new regime. Business owners and eligible professionals, by contrast, may have access to presumptive schemes designed to simplify taxation while accounting for the nature of their income-generating activities. The comparison therefore illustrates why two people receiving the same headline amount of ₹15 lakh can face very different tax outcomes. The final liability depends not merely on how much money is received, but on how that income is earned, which tax provisions apply and what deductions or presumptive mechanisms are legally available.

Swiggy Shares Fall 5% After Q1 Losses, Brokerages Split on Stock Outlook

New Delhi: Swiggy shares fell more than 5 per cent in intraday trade on Friday after the food delivery and quick-commerce company reported its June quarter results, with mixed brokerage views adding to investor uncertainty over the pace of growth and profitability. The stock opened at ₹292.25 on the BSE against its previous close of ₹295.80 and declined as much as 5.34 per cent to ₹280. It later recovered part of the losses during the morning session. Swiggy reported a consolidated net loss of ₹791 crore for the quarter ended June 30, compared with a loss of ₹1,197 crore in the corresponding quarter a year earlier. However, the loss widened marginally from ₹800 crore in the March quarter. Revenue from operations rose 37 per cent year-on-year to ₹6,812 crore, reflecting continued expansion across the company's food delivery and quick-commerce businesses. Gross order value (GOV) in its core food delivery business increased 17.4 per cent year-on-year to ₹9,490 crore. The earnings prompted sharply different assess-



ments from brokerages. ICICI Securities retained its 'buy' rating on Swiggy and set a target price of ₹520 per share, pointing to improving economics in the company's quick-commerce arm, Instamart. Instamart achieved contribution-level breakeven during the quarter, with a growing number of dark stores becoming profitable. The development was viewed as an important step towards improving the economics of Swiggy's rapidly expanding quick-commerce operations. JM Financial, however, took a more cautious stance and downgraded Swiggy to a 'sell', assigning a target price of ₹250. The brokerage flagged slower growth in the food-delivery business, continued losses associated with platform

innovation and execution-related challenges in quick commerce. The divergent brokerage calls reflect the competing factors shaping Swiggy's investment outlook. While improving profitability at Instamart could support the company's longer-term path towards sustainable earnings, concerns remain over competitive intensity, expansion costs and the ability of its food-delivery business to maintain growth. For investors, the June-quarter performance therefore presented a mixed picture: revenue growth remained strong and losses were substantially lower than a year earlier, but the sequential deterioration in net loss and differing views over the company's growth and execution prospects kept pressure on the stock.

AI Adoption Set to Revive India's IT Hiring, Quess Corp Says

New Delhi: Growing enterprise adoption of artificial intelligence, cloud computing and automation is expected to revive hiring in India's information technology sector over the coming quarters, with demand increasingly shifting towards professionals capable of deploying AI solutions at scale, according to staffing firm Quess Corp. Industry executives said the initial slowdown in entry-level recruitment and conventional software roles is giving way to a new phase of hiring as companies accelerate the adoption of generative AI, cloud platforms and large-scale data infrastructure. India's existing AI workforce is estimated at around 3.5 lakh to 3.8 lakh professionals, while immediate industry demand is projected at nearly 6.8 lakh to 7.1 lakh positions. The resulting shortage is particularly pronounced in specialised

operational skills required to implement and manage AI systems rather than in basic knowledge of the technology. The widening gap is prompting IT services companies and large enterprises to place greater emphasis on candidates with practical expertise in machine learning, data engineering, cloud architecture and domain-specific AI applications. Employers are increasingly seeking professionals who can integrate AI into business operations and translate emerging technologies into commercially viable solutions. The shift is also changing the composition of technology jobs. While some conventional roles face pressure from automation and productivity gains, demand is expanding for workers who can build, deploy, monitor and govern AI-enabled systems across enterprise environments.



Quess Corp executives expect technology hiring to gain further momentum as companies move beyond experimentation and expand AI programmes into core business functions. Financial services, healthcare and manufacturing are among the sectors expected to increase investments

in AI-powered platforms, consulting and automation. The anticipated recovery is likely to favour specialised and job-ready talent, making upskilling increasingly important for technology professionals seeking to remain competitive as enterprise technology requirements evolve.

For India's IT sector, the trend points to a shift rather than a disappearance of technology employment, with future recruitment expected to be increasingly driven by AI implementation, cloud transformation, advanced data capabilities and sector-specific digital solutions.

Sensex, Nifty Recover Early Losses on Earnings Boost

New Delhi: Indian benchmark equity indices recovered sharply from their early-session lows on Friday, with the Nifty 50 climbing back above the 24,350 mark as strong quarterly earnings and buying in financial and automobile stocks helped offset weakness in information technology counters. The Sensex also pared its initial losses and moved into positive territory as investors responded to a mixed but largely supportive set of first-quarter earnings. The recovery came after the benchmarks had faced selling pressure in early trade, highlighting continued volatility in the domestic market. Financial stocks emerged among the key drivers of the rebound. Bajaj Finance gained more than 8 per cent after reporting a strong June-quarter performance, making it one of the biggest contributors to the market's recovery. The lender's quarterly profit rose 27 per cent year-on-year to ₹5,986 crore, while assets under management

increased 24 per cent to ₹5.47 lakh crore. Automobile stocks also supported the broader market. Hyundai Motor India shares advanced more than 7 per cent despite the company reporting a 35 per cent year-on-year decline in June-quarter profit. Investors appeared to focus on the company's operating performance and management commentary alongside the results. The gains in financial and automobile counters helped cushion selling pressure in select IT stocks, which remained a drag on the benchmark indices. The IT weakness reflected continued caution around the sector amid concerns over global technology spending and the outlook for traditional technology services. Market sentiment was also supported by the ongoing June-quarter earnings season, with a large number of Indian companies scheduled to announce their first-quarter results. More than 100 companies, including several prominent names, were slated to

report their Q1 FY27 numbers on Friday, keeping corporate earnings at the centre of investor attention. Analysts attributed the intraday recovery to continued domestic institutional buying and encouraging corporate earnings commentary. Selective accumulation in financial and automobile shares helped investors absorb early selling and stabilise the broader market. The recovery, however, remained uneven, with investors continuing to assess company-specific earnings, sectoral trends and global market cues. The contrasting performance across IT, banking and automobile stocks reflected a market increasingly driven by individual corporate results rather than a uniform sector-wide trend. With the Nifty reclaiming the 24,350 level during the session, investors remained focused on whether earnings-led buying could sustain the rebound and provide greater stability to the benchmarks following recent bouts of volatility.

Burnham to free mayors from ‘Treasury death grip’ with new devolved powers

UK: England’s regional mayors will be able to break out of the “death grip of the Treasury” by borrowing to invest in big projects under “transformational” plans to shift power out of Whitehall.

For the first time, mayors will keep a share of income tax generated in their area from 2028, as well as business rates totalling tens of millions of pounds by April 2027.

These will replace existing grants rather than being additional money, but local leaders said no longer relying on ringfenced Treasury handouts would “transform” their funding.

Oliver Coppard, the Labour mayor of South Yorkshire, said: “It’s really important because it gets us out of the death grip of the Treasury and gives us that long-term certainty around income.”

Andy Burnham will announce the measures on Friday as part of what he called “the biggest transfer of power from Westminster in a generation”.

He said: “Under our plans, more of the taxes raised in a community will stay in that community. Soon, every local leader will have the power and

resources to improve public transport, build homes and create jobs.

“I know what it’s like to be ignored by politicians in Westminster. I’m not going to make that same mistake now I’m PM.”

Under a new “local first” principle, Burnham will instruct ministers to justify why powers should remain in Whitehall rather than be devolved.

As well as greater control over technical education for teenagers, announced by the government this week, some of those close to the prime minister have called for mayors to oversee schools, GPs and childcare providers through health and education commissioners – a similar role to that played by police and crime commissioners.

No 10 said Britain’s civil service of 520,000 would become “smaller and more strategic” as decision-making moves out of London, where one in five of these officials are based.

England’s directly elected mayors, who control areas spanning three-quarters of the population, would be able to use the revenue generated from business rates and income tax as they wish, including tax



breaks for important industries or rebates to residents.

However, experts said one of the most significant consequences was that it would allow combined authorities to take out 30-year loans against their projected income to fund major

projects that previously needed Treasury approval.

Mayors said they were currently prevented from funding huge initiatives on housing and transport because they could not take out private loans on the basis of one-year funding settlements

from Whitehall.

Henri Murison, the chief executive of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, said the change “completely transforms” what combined authorities would be able to do.

He said the ability for mayors

to borrow against future income could unlock huge transport projects such as an underground station at Manchester Piccadilly.

It is not yet clear what proportion of income tax or business rates would be retained by combined authorities, with officials still working on the numbers. John Healey, the chancellor, is expected to set out the detail in the autumn budget.

Ben Houchen, the Conservative mayor of Tees Valley, suggested he would use the income tax to hand out tax rebates to local people.

However, it is understood that this would be technically extremely difficult given mayors do not know how much individuals have paid in tax. Also, because the income tax revenue is not additional money for mayors but is replacing government grants, it is more likely to be spent on long-term projects than giveaways to residents.

Ministers are considering ways to ensure less economically productive areas such as Humberside and north-east England are not left behind. If mayors received 2.5% of the 20p basic rate of income tax, London would get £2.3bn in 2026-27 while Hull and East Yorkshire

would get £135m, according to a report last month by the think-tank Re:State.

The thinktank IPPR North described the move as “the most significant shift in how England is funded in a generation”.

Policy experts previously said rushing ahead with fiscal devolution risked creating a “two-tier England”, potentially leaving behind roughly a quarter of the country’s population that did not have a mayoral authority.

The government is planning to encourage these areas – spanning millions of people in Dorset, Somerset, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and parts of Kent – to form mayoral authorities in order to benefit from greater autonomy over their funding.

Since 2024, only two combined authorities – Greater Manchester and West Midlands – have been able to keep all of the business rate income generated in their areas.

In Greater Manchester, this amounted to £100m in 2024-25, the first year of operation. Three-quarters was retained by each of the 10 local authorities and £25m was kept by the mayoral authority and spent on projects.

Nepalese Mountaineer Nirmal Purja Among 10 Climbers Missing

Kathmandu: Nepal’s renowned mountaineer Nirmal Purja, popularly known as “Nims Dai”, is among a group of climbers reported missing after a massive avalanche struck Broad Peak in Pakistan. According to the Pakistan Alpine Club, an expedition team climbing the 8,047-metre-high Broad Peak in the Karakoram mountain range was hit by an avalanche on Thursday afternoon.

Preliminary information suggests that contact has been lost with 10 climbers following the incident. The group includes five Nepalese mountaineers,



along with climbers from Pakistan, Oman, China and

the United States. Among those missing is world-fa-

mous Nepalese mountaineer Nirmal Purja. Purja gained

international recognition in 2019 after successfully climbing all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres in the world in a record time of just six months and six days.

Expressing deep concern over the incident, the Pakistan Alpine Club said that search and rescue operations are being intensified in coordination with government authorities and relevant agencies.

The club stated that once weather and operational conditions become favourable, all available rescue resources, including helicopters, will be deployed for the mission.

Caribbean bears brunt of £43bn climate-fuelled damage

Jamaika: Caribbean nations suffered \$53.2bn (£40bn) of damage from climate-fuelled disasters between 2000 and 2024, research into the cost of the climate crisis to developing small islands has found.

The figure is more than 90% of the total \$57bn in economic damage caused by floods, storms and drought across 39 developing island nations in the Caribbean, the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, according to a study by development thinktank ODI Global.

ODI Global also estimates the climate crisis caused more than 190 deaths a year over the 25-year period studied.

The research is important for conversations about global climate reparations, the report’s author, Emily Wilkinson, said.

The Caribbean has been pursuing climate justice after bearing the brunt of the crisis, which is primarily caused by high carbon emitters outside the region.

Several Caribbean countries provided evidence to the international court of justice, the world’s top UN court, in a case that ended last year with a landmark advisory opinion that could mean states are ordered to pay compensation if they fail to tackle fossil fuels and prevent harm to the climate system.

Wilkinson said: “There have always been hurricanes, heavy rainfall, drought and temperature extremes, historically, but it’s really important to be able to say what percentage of that kind of strength or intensity is actually due to increasing global temperatures.

“Climate scientists do these attribution studies and they’re really important for when we start to think about responsibilities for the impacts of climate change, compensation and climate reparation.

“[They] tell you what kind of proportion of the intensity of the event is due to climate change. We’ve

taken it a step further by doing an additional calculation, which is a fraction of attributable risk, to work out what percentage of the damage that’s been reported can be attributed to climate change.”

Published on Wednesday, the report also highlights the devastating impact of Hurricane Melissa, which tore through Jamaica in October 2025 with winds of 185mph (298 km/h), the strongest ever recorded in the country.

Experts say the storm was supercharged by global heating. The report attributes \$9.7bn – about 80% of the \$12.2bn of the government’s calculated damage and losses – directly to the climate crisis. This figure is almost half of the country’s total economy and far above commitments to the UN’s loss and damage fund to help climate vulnerable countries recover from disasters.

For Jamaica, it was the second year in a row that brutal storms caused widespread damage, after 2024’s Hurricane Beryl. Thousands of people were left without homes, livelihoods, communication services and basic utilities such as water and power.

As climate losses escalate, ODI says that international financing for climate crisis mitigation and adaptation is moving in the wrong direction as some wealthy nations cut contributions.

Government agencies and service providers in countries such as Jamaica have had to rethink their operations.

In May, Jamaica’s government passed the National Reconstruction and Resilience Authority Act to speed up post-disaster rebuilding and improve resilience, and last month its prime minister, Andrew Holness, promised to invest in cleaner and cheaper renewable sources such as solar.

For Marcelo Cataldo, the chief executive of Digicel Group, one of the Caribbean’s leading internet and telecoms providers, the

worsening climate shocks mean the company needs to rethink how it powers its network. Digicel has responded by accelerating a major shift to solar energy.

The company has partnered with the American renewable energy company Caban Energy to roll out solar-powered telecom sites in Jamaica and Barbados, with plans to expand to 15 of its 25 markets.

Digicel says their solar systems can generate 15,000MWh of clean energy a year, enough to power 10,000 Caribbean homes. They also avoid approximately 200,000 litres of diesel use annually and cut emissions by 16,457 tonnes of CO₂e – equivalent to removing 3,600 cars from the road.

Solar, Cataldo says, is not just more environmentally friendly but also more resilient, allowing communication systems to remain online for longer if a storm knocks out power.

“We know that in a big hurricane ... the infrastructure of the electricity company will affect us and all the other industries. Having solar is an outstanding alternative to return the service faster to our customers,” Cataldo said.

Wilkinson said switching to solar is one solution Caribbean nations could consider to improve resilience, but “they will need to overcome high upfront costs and address issues such as intermittency, storage and grid stability”.

For Cataldo, the solution is partnerships with companies such as Caban Energy. “This is the kind of collaboration needed to accelerate the energy transition for our region,” he added.

ODI Global’s findings suggest that such adaptations will become increasingly necessary. According to the report, under a 1.5C warming scenario, storms alone could cause a further \$49bn in climate-attributable losses across small island developing nations by 2050. At 2C, that rises to \$51bn.

UK government reviews why police ceding criminal cases to US military

UK: The UK government and police chiefs are reviewing the process through which US military personnel accused of committing serious crimes on UK soil are avoiding the British justice system.

The effort, involving multiple government departments, is examining why UK police forces, which have primary responsibility for investigating such cases, have been ceding jurisdiction to US military investigators.

Such decisions pave the way for alleged perpetrators to be tried in a US military court martial process, an alternative justice system in which victims are often not given the same protections as they would get in a British court.

The government and police reviews were launched after the Guardian uncovered a series of cases in which British police forces allowed the American military to take over investigations into allegations of serious sexual offences.

When the first case was revealed in June, Down-

ing Street said it was “very concerning” that UK authorities were not involved in the prosecution of an American fighter pilot accused of raping and strangling a British woman, Sarah Steele, in his apartment after they met on a dating app.

After Cambridgeshire police allowed US military police to take control of the case, the pilot, Capt Jacob Wulfson, was prosecuted in a court martial on a US airbase in Suffolk. The jury, an all-male panel of air force officers, convicted Wulfson of strangling an intimate partner but acquitted him of sexual assault.

Victims of sexual attacks by US military personnel that would meet a common definition of rape in the UK are finding that their attackers are instead being prosecuted for lesser offences.

Under the set of laws that govern US forces, known as the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), the crime of rape carries a narrower definition than that adopted by the British courts, meaning many cas-

es are charged instead as sexual assault. Wulfson was given a six-month sentence which he is serving at the US base RAF Lakenheath. In recent weeks, Home Office and justice ministers met Steele to discuss her case and whether changes should be made to how UK police and prosecutors handle cases involving US military personnel.

A government spokesperson said Steele had “shown incredible bravery in coming forward” and ministers had “committed to identifying and learning any lessons from this case to ensure that victims are supported and treated with the seriousness, dignity and compassion they deserve”.

The spokesperson said officials were working closely with the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) “to look at the guidance in place to ensure that cases are correctly referred to the Crown Prosecution Service for advice”.

Ministers have promised to press the US government for a full account

of what happened in the Wulfson case. In a statement, the Foreign Office said it had “been engaging with the US on this matter”. The Guardian has unearthed several other cases involving US air force personnel who avoided UK courts despite their alleged crimes occurring while off duty. In each, local police handed over the investigation to military prosecutors, sometimes within days of receiving a report of a crime on UK soil.

Hannes Marschalek allegedly exposed himself to a 16-year-old girl and four young women in Littleport, Cambridgeshire. He admitted a charge of indecent conduct after negotiating a plea bargain at a court martial. The conviction was later quashed on technical grounds.

Tyrion Davis allegedly raped two British women in Suffolk. He was convicted of one count of sexual assault when he was court-martialed but acquitted of 10 further counts of sexual assault and abusive sexual contact.

Why Reducing Carbohydrates Is Not the Solution and How to Consume Them Properly Instead



Carbohydrates have long been a focal point in discussions surrounding diet culture – they have been lauded, vilified, and frequently misinterpreted. In the quest to reduce caloric intake or pursue weight loss, carbohydrates are often the first to be eliminated. However, they continue to be the body’s most effective energy source, crucial for cognitive function, physical activity, and hormonal equilibrium. The problem lies not with carbohydrates themselves, but rather with how meals are organized in relation to them.

A properly constructed carbohydrate-rich meal does not result in drowsiness or hunger shortly after consumption. Rather, it provides energy for physical activity, enhances concentration, and promotes metabolic well-being. The essential factor is achieving balance by considering carbohydrates as a base rather than the entirety of the meal. **Quality Over Quantity: Choosing The Right Carbs** “Carbohydrates have long been misunderstood,” says Gurpreet Grover, Health & Wellness Coach, noting that weight gain and fa-

tigue are often blamed on carbs when the real problem is poor meal composition. She emphasises starting with quality sources such as whole grains, fruits, legumes, and starchy vegetables. These complex carbs provide fibre, vitamins, and slower energy release, unlike refined options that spike blood sugar quickly. Dr Archana Batra, Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Educator, agrees that carbs deserve a central place on the plate, especially when chosen according to one’s lifestyle and cultural habits. Rice, roti, mil-

lets, potatoes, and legumes can all work – when used wisely. Every Carb Needs A Protein Partner One of the most effective ways to make carbohydrates work better in the body is to pair them with protein. “Protein slows digestion, stabilises blood sugar, and improves satiety,” says Grover. Simple additions such as lentils with rice, paneer with roti, eggs on toast, or yoghurt with fruit can transform a carb-heavy meal into a balanced one. Dr Batra reinforces this approach, calling protein the anchor of a carb-based meal. Whether it’s dal, curd, tofu, eggs, fish, or chicken, protein helps prevent post-meal crashes and reduces cravings later in the day. Without it, carbs tend to digest too quickly, leading to hunger and energy dips. **The Supporting Role Of Healthy Fats** Fats often get overlooked, but they play a crucial supporting role in carbohydrate digestion. “Healthy fats improve nutrient absorption and slow glucose release.” A drizzle of ghee, olive oil, nuts, seeds, or avocado can enhance both flavour and metabolic stability. **Fibre, Volume, And The Power Of Vegetables** No carb-based meal is complete without vegetables. Fibre-rich vegetables add bulk, micronutrients, and gut support without excessive calories. They also improve insulin response and digestion.

The Importance of Daily Food Habits Over Ideal Diets



“Accomplished is preferable to flawless,” states Priyasha Saluja, Founder of The Cinnamon Kitchen, Hormone Health Coach, and Plant-Based Chef. “This is a phrase we frequently employ in both our professional and personal lives, and it is equally relevant to the culinary realm.” For many years, the concept of healthy eating has been portrayed as something that must be executed flawlessly. The ideal diet. The correct guidelines. The appropriate moment to begin. However, individuals do not cease to eat healthily due to a lack of concern. They discontinue because perfect meal plans are not practical in everyday life. On a regular weekday, meetings run late. Lunch gets delayed. By evening, energy is low and cooking feels like too much effort. In moments like this, strict food rules tend to break down not because of poor discipline, but because the plan simply doesn’t fit the day. The same thing happens around workouts. “People plan to eat before exercising.” Then work runs over, traffic builds up, or energy drops. The choice becomes simple, go to the gym without eating or skip the gym altogether. This is why everyday food habits matter more than perfect diets. On a regular weekday, meetings run late. Lunch gets delayed. By evening, energy is low and cooking feels like too much effort. In moments like this, strict food rules tend to break down not because of poor discipline, but because the plan simply doesn’t fit the day. The same thing happens around workouts. “People plan to eat before exercising,” Saluja says. “Then work runs over, traffic builds up, or energy drops. The choice becomes simple, go to the gym

without eating or skip the gym altogether.” According to her, this isn’t a willpower issue. It’s a practicality issue. Track briefly, not obsessively Short-term tracking can be useful. “It helps you understand what you’re actually eating and highlights gaps in protein or fibre,” Saluja explains. Once awareness is built, occasional tracking is enough. Keep two meals consistent Fixing two meals around protein and fibre every day reduces daily decision-making. “It keeps eating balanced without feeling restrictive,” she adds. The third meal can remain flexible. Don’t eliminate snacks or desserts “Total restriction doesn’t last,” Saluja says. Planning small portions of snacks or desserts helps with portion control and makes eating feel realistic rather than punitive. This philosophy also shapes how food is designed at The Cinnamon Kitchen. “Instead of creating products for ideal routines, I focus on how food fits into real moments,” Saluja explains. The Almond Flour Cacao Cookie, for instance, works as a practical pre-workout option on rushed mornings. Methi Millet Crackers quietly replace habitual tea-time snacks without demanding a lifestyle overhaul.

The Most Important Myths About Hair Patches

Hair loss can greatly affect one’s self-esteem; however, numerous individuals, both men and women, are reluctant to investigate hair patches because of prevalent misunderstandings. Contemporary hair patch systems have advanced considerably, yet persistent outdated beliefs still deter people from viewing this efficient, non-invasive remedy as a viable option. It is essential to distinguish between reality and myth.



Myth 1: Hair patches look fake and are easy to spot This is one of the most common misconceptions. Today’s hair patches are designed using advanced materials that closely mimic the natural scalp and hair texture. When customised to match an individual’s hair colour, density, and hairline, they blend seamlessly and are virtually undetectable, even at close range. Myth 2: Hair patches

can fall off easily Many people fear the embarrassment of a patch slipping or coming loose. In reality, professional hair patch systems are secured using medical-grade adhesives or tapes designed for active lifestyles. When properly fitted and maintained, they remain stable during workouts, swimming, and everyday activities. Myth 3: Hair patches are uncomfortable

to wear Modern hair patches are lightweight, breathable, and engineered for long-term comfort. Unlike older versions, current systems allow airflow to the scalp, reducing irritation and making them comfortable for extended wear. Myth 4: Hair patches are only for advanced baldness Hair patches are not limited to severe hair loss cases. They are equally effective

for individuals with partial hair loss, thinning crowns, or receding hairlines, making them a versatile option across different stages of hair loss. Myth 5: Hair patches require high maintenance While basic upkeep is necessary, maintenance is simple and manageable. With periodic professional servicing and routine home care, hair patches can remain in excellent condition for months. Hair loss can greatly affect one’s self-esteem; however, numerous individuals, both men and women, are reluctant to investigate hair patches because of prevalent misunderstandings. Contemporary hair patch systems have advanced considerably, yet persistent outdated beliefs still deter people from viewing this efficient, non-invasive remedy as a viable option. It is essential to distinguish between reality and myth.

reviewed a few well-known handbag companies this year



When it comes to accessories, the one item I will not settle for less on is a handbag. Unlike clothing that changes with seasons or trends, a quality handbag integrates into your daily life. It transports your laptop to the office, holds your makeup for quick touch-ups, accommodates your charger for extended outings, and still manages to fit snacks, receipts, and all the other items you didn’t intend to bring along. As someone who reviews fashion and lifestyle products professionally, I’ve tested more handbags this year than I can count. Some looked beautiful online but felt impractical after a week of use. Others were functional but lacked personality. And then there were a handful that genuinely earned a permanent spot in my wardrobe. After months of carrying them to office meetings, press events, café hopping, airport runs and weekend brunches, these are the brands that truly stood out, and one of them surprised me enough to become my favourite. Miraggio completely changed my expectations If I had to recommend just one handbag brand to someone shopping today, it would probably be Miraggio. The reason isn’t simply that the bags look premium. Plenty of brands manage

that. What impressed me was how wearable the designs actually are. Miraggio has mastered something many handbag brands struggle with: creating pieces that feel trend-forward without becoming trend-dependent. Their silhouettes are modern, the hardware feels thoughtfully designed, and every collection has a slightly playful personality without going overboard. Instead of copying luxury bags, they seem to have built their own design identity, which is refreshing. The Rosalind Tote quickly became my everyday office companion. It comfortably fits my laptop, notebook, charger, wallet and everything else I carry during long workdays while still looking structured enough for meetings. The detachable sling strap is another thoughtful touch because some days you want polished top handles, while on others you simply need your hands free. On weekends, however, I almost always switch to the Vanilla Shoulder Bag. It has that effortless “cool girl” shape that’s everywhere right now but still feels timeless enough to wear for years. I’ve paired it with oversized shirts, dresses, denim and even Indian wear, and somehow it never feels out of place. That’s surprisingly rare for a statement handbag. More importantly, both

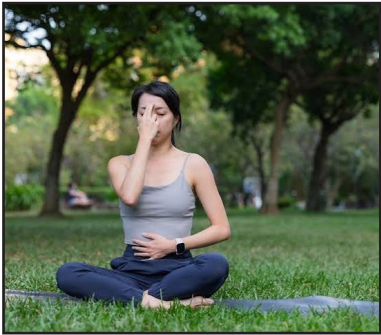
bags have survived months of regular use without losing their shape, which says a lot about the overall construction. Off-White proves statement bags never go out of style If Miraggio wins for everyday practicality, Off-White easily wins when it comes to making an outfit memorable. Yes, it’s significantly more expensive, but it also belongs in a completely different category. The leather shoulder bag I tried instantly transformed even the simplest outfits. A white shirt and jeans suddenly felt fashion-week ready. A black dress looked far more elevated. That’s the power of a well-designed statement accessory. What I enjoy most about Off-White is that it never takes itself too seriously. The designs remain playful, youthful and instantly recognisable without sacrificing quality. It’s definitely an investment purchase rather than an impulse buy, but if you’re building a long-term designer handbag collection, it makes sense. Lino Perros remains one of the safest choices Whenever someone asks me for an elegant work handbag that won’t break the bank, Lino Perros is almost always part of the conversation. The Monroe Tote feels polished, understated and dependable. It isn’t trying

to be the loudest accessory in your wardrobe, and that’s exactly why it works. Neutral colours, structured construction and practical interiors make it one of those bags you’ll probably continue carrying years from now. For professionals building their first office wardrobe, it’s a brand that’s difficult to go wrong with. IRTH by House of Titan quietly deserves more attention One of my nicest surprises this year was IRTH by House of Titan. The Vivienne Tote has a refined, minimalist aesthetic that feels very aligned with today’s quiet luxury trend. It’s sophisticated without being flashy and transitions beautifully between office meetings, travel and casual weekends. The craftsmanship feels premium, and the overall finish gives the impression of a bag that’s far more expensive than it actually is. So, which brand would I buy again? After reviewing all of them, I realised I naturally kept reaching for the Miraggio bags more than anything else. Not because they were sent for review, but because they genuinely fit into my everyday life. As someone who spends long hours outside the house attending launches, interviewing designers, covering fashion events and moving between meetings, I need accessories that work as hard as I do. Miraggio managed to balance functionality with fashion in a way very few brands have. Off-White remains my choice for statement dressing. Lino Perros is my recommendation for timeless office wear. IRTH by House of Titan is one I’d happily recommend to anyone who loves understated luxury. But if you’re asking me which handbag brand surprised me the most this year, and which one I’d happily spend my own money on again, it’s Miraggio.

A Lifestyle Expert Presents a Simple 5-Minute Breathwork Routine to Reduce Cortisol Levels

In a world where stress has become a standard condition rather than an anomaly, wellness transcends mere nutrition, exercise, or the pursuit of eight hours of sleep. It involves discovering methods that can foster inner tranquility. Often, the most effective tools are the most straightforward. Integrative lifestyle specialist Luke Coutinho is encouraging individuals to turn their focus inward for relief, utilizing a type of breathwork that claims to reduce stress hormones in mere minutes. He recently shared a video emphasising that while fancy routines and supplements have their place, they mean little if your mind is in constant survival mode. Chronic stress, he says, isn’t just a modern inconvenience, but it’s one of the most damaging states for the human body. Why Stress Undermines Every Other Wellness Habit According to Luke, stress silently corrodes health from within long before symptoms appear. It disrupts sleep, weakens immunity, inflames the body, and, over time, overrides even the healthiest lifestyle habits.

“Your nutrition, your workouts, your supplements – they’re important. But none of them can compensate for chronic stress,” he explains. For over 14 years, he says, almost every patient he has worked with – from athletes to professionals – has had one shared denominator: elevated, long-term stress. Some sleep well, some don’t, yet the underlying emotional load remains the same. The consequence? Persistently high cortisol, the hormone responsible for the body’s stress response. When cortisol stays elevated, the entire internal environment shifts into imbalance, making recovery, rest, and healing difficult. The Breathing Shortcut: A 5-Minute Technique To Lower Cortisol To counter this, Luke highlights a science-backed breathing exercise that can lower cortisol almost immediately. He talks about the widely studied 4-7-8 breathing technique, known for activating the parasympathetic nervous system – the body’s natural relaxation mode. How To Practice 4-7-8 Breathing Sit upright or lie down in a comfortable position.



Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds. Hold your breath for 7 seconds. Exhale audibly through your mouth with a gentle “whoosh” for 8 seconds. Even 3–5 minutes of this pattern, he says, can reduce cortisol by 25 to 35 per cent, offering the body a rapid reset. Your problems may remain the same, Luke admits, but how your body responds doesn’t have to. When cortisol drops, your internal environment changes and inflammation reduces, clarity returns, sleep deepens, and the nervous system stabilises. So the next time stress tightens its grip, you may not need a supplement or a wellness overhaul. You may simply need to pause and breathe.

ENTERTAINMENT

Spider-Man delivers landmark opening collection at Indian box office

Mumbai : The webslinger has officially taken over Indian cinemas as Spider-Man: Brand New Day swung onto screens on July 30, 2026. Serving as the 38th entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the film marks the high-profile return of Tom Holland and Zendaya in the leads, under the direction of Destin Daniel Cretton. Backed by an ensemble cast, the film's openings are superb at the Indian box office.

The craze surrounding the release across India reached a zenith. Theaters across metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad witnessed huge crowds lined up for midnight and early morning screenings. Die-hard Marvel enthusiasts flooded multiplexes dressed in full Spidey costumes, waving banners, and chanting in cel-



ebration inside packed auditoriums. Tickets were sold out days in advance across premium 3D and IMAX screens. This unprecedented fan frenzy translated into historic numbers at the box office. According to trade tracker Sacnilk, the superhero adventure staged a flying start by generating ₹60.60 crore

net and ₹74.46 crore gross on its opening day alone. With 17,250 shows organized nationwide, the film registered an extraordinary average occupancy of 72.3%. By achieving these staggering figures, Spider-Man: Brand New Day comfortably outstripped recent major releases like The Odyssey, which

gathered ₹17.40 crore net on its opening day, while also shattering the long-held opening day record set by Avengers: Endgame in the Indian market. The impressive revenue earnings highlighted Spider-Man's pan-India appeal across multiple language markets. The original English release spearheaded the charge with ₹32.25 crore net. The Hindi dub performed exceptionally well, contributing ₹22 crore net to the overall total. Southern markets added further strength, with the Telugu version taking in ₹3.25 crore net and the Tamil dub adding ₹3 crore net, supplemented by ₹7 lakh from Malayalam and ₹3 lakh from Kannada screenings. With strong word-of-mouth momentum, the blockbuster is expected to do even better over the weekend.

Raghav Juyal's bhai tera star hai sees quiet day 1 opening at the box office

Mumbai : Raghav Juyal's first film as a solo lead has finally arrived in cinemas, but its box office journey hasn't begun on the strongest note. Bhai Tera Star Hai has registered a modest opening on Day 1, July 30, 2026. The film earned only Rs 25 lakh at the box office and mostly received negative reviews. It also suffered because of the clash with Spider-Man: Brand New Day.

As per Sacnilk, Bhai Tera Star Hai earned an estimated Rs 25 lakh on Day 1. The opening is far from encouraging, and with poor reviews and weak word of mouth, the film will be hoping for a turnaround over the weekend. According to media reports, Bhai Tera Star Hai was made on a budget of Rs 15-25 crore. Even if the lower estimate is considered, the film's Rs 25 lakh opening is underwhelming. It ideally needed to open at around Rs 1 crore or more to get off to a stronger start.

Bhai Tera Star Hai follows an actor who loses money in a cricket betting racket and is given just one night to repay a dangerous gangster. However,



a lie involving his sister sparks a series of misunderstandings, leading to a botched robbery, gangsters on his trail, police intervention and complete chaos across London as he races against time. The films stars Raghav Juyal alongside Sanjay Kapoor and Niharika NM. Bhai Tera Star Hai feels like a missed opportunity for a genuinely funny entertainer. It has all the ingredients for a laugh riot but the writing rarely rises to the occasion. Raghav throws himself whole-

heartedly into the madness but even his committed, scene-stealing performance cannot compensate for a screenplay that lacks the punch and edge.

Raghav Juyal had looked back at the last 16 years of his journey, saying that he always knew he's in it for the long haul. "Main jo bolta hoon, woh hota hai. I wouldn't call it manifestation but kaam karne ki power. When I said that I would become the best dancer, I became one," he said.

New music alert: Shaan and Deedar Kaur drop romantic single 'Dildara'

Mumbai : For over two decades, Shaan's voice has been the soundtrack to some of Bollywood's most unforgettable love stories. Now, the celebrated singer returns with Dildara, a breezy, feel-good romantic melody alongside the immensely talented Deedar Kaur, marking their first-ever musical collaboration.

Released today by Times Music, Dildara is a vibrant travel romance set against the breathtaking beaches, scenic mountain roads, and stunning landscapes of Thailand. Composed by Udipaan Sharma with lyrics by Shloke Lal, Dildara blends

playful romance, heartfelt emotions, and an infectious melody into a song that celebrates love, adventure, and unforgettable memories.

Shaan said, "Dildara is the kind of love song that slowly finds its way into your life. I really enjoyed recording this song with Deedar Kaur." Deedar Kaur added, "Dildara has a beautiful energy to it. Collaborating with Shaan for the first time has been incredibly special."

Mandar Thakur, CEO, Times Music, said, "Dildara is a special song. Bringing Shaan and Deedar Kaur together for the very first time has resulted in a



beautiful musical partnership." Dildara is now available across all major audio streaming platforms and on the Times Music YouTube channel.

Shweta Tiwari shares cryptic post after ex-husband's recent allegations

Mumbai : Shweta Tiwari has shared her first post on social media after ex-husband Raja Chaudhary's recent explosive claims. In a chat with Siddharth Kannan, Raja Chaudhary denied the domestic abuse allegations levelled against him by Shweta, and even accused the actress of having an extramarital affair with co-star Cezanne Khan. Raja also opened up about why he seemingly "chose" a Rs 93 lakh flat over their daughter, Palak Tiwari.

After Raja's interview went viral, fans were waiting to see if Shweta Tiwari or Palak Tiwari would issue any statements against his claims. Shweta has now taken to Instagram to share her first post amid the row. However, Shweta's post is about her upcoming stint on Traitors 2. She has not reacted to any of Raja's claims. Shweta's inclusion in Traitors 2 is being met with much excitement online. Traitors 2 also marks Shweta's comeback to real-

ity television. Besides the actress, the game of deception will also feature Rida Tharana, Munawar Faruqui, Sahil Salathia, Dalip Tahil, Rhea Chakraborty, Parul Gulati, and Ikka, among others.

Meanwhile, Raja Chaudhary's claims about Shweta Tiwari have gone viral. Raja accused Shweta of dating her Kasauti Zindagi Kay co-star Cezanne Khan while she was married to him and went on to claim that the actress had several affairs during that time. He said, "... She was working with him. She was staying in his house. Even a common friend of ours confessed that she used to come here with him... Even he himself said yes, that we're in a relationship." However, Raja claimed that Shweta never admitted to him that she was allegedly dating Cezanne Khan. He also denied domestic violence allegations and said that he "never" raised his hand at Shweta.

Sanjay Dutt reflects on father Sunil Dutt's decision to send him shooting ahead of rocky debut

Mumbai : Sanjay Dutt's Bollywood debut was meant to be one of the happiest moments of his life. The son of legendary actors Sunil Dutt and Nargis, he was all set to be launched as a leading man with Rocky (1981), directed by his father. However, the family faced a personal tragedy when Nargis was diagnosed with cancer.

By the late 1970s, Sunil Dutt had begun work on Rocky. The family was excited about Sanjay's debut, and Nargis was deeply involved in the preparations. She was eager to see her son carry forward the family's cinematic legacy. However, fate had other plans for the family. "So, mom died of cancer, unfortunately, pancreatic cancer. This was in the early '80s, so even the technology we have today



wasn't available back then. There was this massive surgery that was done. We went to New York and got it done at Sloan Kettering," said Sanjay, in a recent chat on AIG Hospitals' YouTube channel.

He added, "There were a lot of complications with her. I was very young then, about 19 or 20. To see my

mother go through all of that, we donated platelets, did everything we could. My sisters were younger than me, and it was a very traumatic time." The actor said, "My film was about to release as well, so that was another pressure. My father sent me back to complete the film while my mother was in a coma. At that time, I just

couldn't understand it, why complete the film when my mother was in a coma? But anyway, I did that and came back."

Sanjay recalled Nargis' final days and said, "I saw her fighting. I think she just wanted to come back home somehow. She kept fighting until she came back, and once she was home, she gave up the fight. We lost her after she returned here." One of Sanjay Dutt's biggest wishes was for his mother to watch Rocky. In later interviews, he recalled how important her opinion was to him and how much he wanted to make her proud. Unfortunately, Nargis passed away on May 3, 1981, just days before Rocky was released in theatres on May 8, 1981. She never got the chance to watch her son's first film.

Sandeep Reddy vanga reacts to Ramayana trailer: 'dharma always prevails'

Mumbai : The trailer of Ranbir Kapoor, Sai Pallavi and Yash's Ramayana has found another admirer in filmmaker Sandeep Reddy Vanga. The Animal director shared his reaction on social media after watching the first glimpse of Nitesh Tiwari's ambitious mythological drama, praising both its scale and its central message.

Vanga's response comes as the trailer continues to draw attention for its visual treatment, performances and music by Hans Zimmer and AR Rahman. Sharing his thoughts online, Vanga wrote, "YEH RAM YUG KA AARAMBH HAI." He added, "Not just a trailer, but the eternal reminder that DHARMA will always triumph over ADHARMA."

His post quickly caught the attention of fans, many of whom agreed with his take on the film's larger theme. The filmmaker's reaction has also added to the growing industry chatter around Ramayana, which is being mounted as one of the biggest Indian productions in recent years. While the makers have kept several details under



wraps, the trailer offers a closer look at the film's principal characters and its interpretation of the epic.

Ranbir Kapoor appears as Lord Ram, with the trailer presenting him in a restrained and emotionally composed avatar. Sai Pallavi plays Sita, while Yash steps into the role of Ravana. Yash's appearance has emerged as one of the most-discussed elements of the trailer. His imposing screen presence and intense portrayal have already sparked consid-

erable conversation online. Sai Pallavi, meanwhile, has been praised for bringing quiet strength and grace to Sita. The trailer also places emphasis on the emotional bond between Ram and Sita, alongside the conflict that drives the larger narrative. Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, Ramayana has been produced by Namit Malhotra and Yash. The film has been designed as a large-scale theatrical spectacle, combining elaborate production design with extensive visual effects.

Jana Nayagan race to ₹300 crore: set to overtake good bad ugly's final haul



Chennai : Actor Vijay's Jana Nayagan was released in theatres amid huge expectations, as it is considered

the actor's farewell film before he entered politics and went on to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

The film is now racing towards the Rs 300 crore mark at the box office and continues to perform well in theatres.

If reports are to be believed, Jana Nayagan is set to surpass the lifetime box office collections of Ajith's Good Bad Ugly. The film is directed by H. Vinoth and produced by KVN Productions. It features Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Mamitha Baiju, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Prakash Raj, Narain, and others in key roles.

Jana Nayagan was originally scheduled for a Pongal release on January 9 but was postponed after the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) held back its certification, citing concerns that certain scenes could potentially hurt religious sentiments. The film received mixed reviews. "The Bobby Deol track, gun-smuggling episodes, and political confrontations feel outdated and disconnected from the central narrative. The sea action sequence, supported by poor visual effects, resembles a television serial rather than a big-budget feature," our review stated.

Kangana drops 1997 throwback as Sita with a dig at liberals

Mumbai : Actress and politician Kangana Ranaut took a trip down memory lane by sharing a childhood photograph from 1997, where she essayed the role of Maa Sita during a school play based on the Ramayana.

Taking to her social media account, Kangana reposted an old picture captioned "Sweet memories." According to the caption, the picture hails from the 1997 batch of Kangana's school in Sarkaghat, Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district. The picture shows a young Kangana dressed as Maa Sita in a red sari, standing beside another student portraying Lord Ram, while a third child dressed as Hanuman kneels in front with folded hands. She also shared another



zoomed version of the picture focusing only on her, and captioned it as, "My aashirwad to all liberals." For the uninitiated, Kangana has been making headlines for her remarks on the

ongoing Gen Z protests. In a series of posts on her social media account this week, the actress-politician criticised the protesters and referred to some of them as "gutter chhaap"

(street trash), while objecting to the language used by some protestors against Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media and during protests.

On the work front, Kangana was last seen in the movie Bharat Bhagya Vidhata. The movie was a medical drama-thriller based on the courageous staff of Mumbai's Cama and Albbless Hospital during the 26/11 terror attacks. Directed by Manoj Tapadia, the film showed Kangana Ranaut essay the role of a nurse and pay tribute to the doctors, nurses and hospital workers who risked their lives to protect nearly 400 patients during one of India's darkest nights. The movie received a mixed response at the box office.

No Water, No Food: Maharashtra Building Collapse Victims Describe Their Experience



New Delhi, July 31: In Bhiwandi, Maharashtra, scores of families are spending another day on the roadside, waiting for food and water rather than rescue, as cranes, excavators, and NDRF workers continue to sort through the shattered concrete of a fallen residential structure. Nine people have died and four more have been injured in the collapse of the C1-classified building. Beyond the debris, however, is another tale: that of the families who lived in makeshift communities next to the structure and fled in a matter of seconds, leaving behind all they possessed. "We had just finished one roti and were about to take another," recalls Priya Jaiswal, pointing towards what was once her home. "Suddenly there was a loud thud. Dust engulfed the entire area. We covered our faces with cloth and escaped through another route. Everything else, our belongings, our clothes, remained inside." The family of four has spent the night on the roadside. "Since last night, no one from the government has spoken to us. There has been no food, no water. We've only eaten one roti since then," she said. Just a few metres away, another woman recounts how narrowly her family escaped. "We were getting ready to sleep when a portion of the structure fell onto our house. It was raining and the door was shut. I pushed my son out first and told

him, 'You should live. I can die'. My son and daughter got out, then my husband and I escaped." For many, survival came at the cost of everything they owned. "Our cash was inside. Our jewellery was inside. We left everything because saving our lives was more important," said another resident. When some families later attempted to retrieve their belongings, they allege they were prevented from doing so. "The police hit us with lathis and told us not to enter," alleges Jaiswal. Residents also question why the building, despite its condition, continued to have people living inside. "There were people inside that building. No one from the administration ever came to inspect them," said a resident. Long before specialised rescue teams reached the site, locals say the first rescue operation was carried out by ordinary residents. "As soon as the building collapsed, everyone from the locality rushed here," says Dilip Kumar, who remained at the site until nearly 2 am. "People were trying to jump from the building. We brought ladders and helped many climb down. Even those who managed to escape turned around and started rescuing others." He points to neighbouring structures, many of which bear visible cracks. "These buildings are also weak. They could collapse anytime." The administration, however, maintains that the tragedy

occurred despite repeated warnings. Maharashtra minister Girish Mahajan said the building, constructed around 2007-08, had been classified as a C1 structure, meaning it was beyond repair, and that the municipal corporation had issued notices asking residents to vacate on multiple occasions. According to him, nearly 30 families had already been evacuated before the collapse. "The contractor had started repair work without taking permission. That resulted in this incident," Mahajan said. He announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh for the families of those killed and added that nearby buildings had been evacuated as a precaution. "The building next to this will also be demolished. We have been appealing to people for a long time to vacate dangerous buildings, but many do not leave. Cluster redevelopment will have to be considered in the future," he said, adding that illegal constructions remain a serious issue in Bhiwandi. Thane District Collector Krushna Panchal also attributed the collapse to unauthorised repair work. "This was a C1 building, which means it was beyond repair. The corporation had issued several notices. Yesterday, without permission, the contractor started repair work. When the ward officer learnt about it, around 30 families were evacuated," Panchal said. However, according to Panchal, workers and a few onlookers later entered the building, after which it collapsed. "The NDRF reached the site within about 40 minutes. A woman and a child were rescued during the initial operation," he said. Panchal also stated that dangerous structures will probably be removed and that structural examinations of nearby buildings would now be conducted. "We have sent notices to all C1-classified buildings. The larger challenge is illegal buildings. We are working on a cluster redevelopment scheme and will first focus on dilapidated structures," he added. However, those guarantees seem far away to the family sitting next to the rubble.

Raghav Chadha says his role has "changed" after a protracted silence on the NEET issue



New Delhi, July 31: He spoke up in Parliament about everything from the cost of airport chai samosas to the issues facing gig workers. However, when thousands of young people protested the NEET paper leak in Delhi's streets, the young neta became completely silent. And many sensed the quiet. Many people ridiculed it on social media and voiced harsh criticism. During his intervention in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, BJP MP Raghav Chadha responded to criticism for his "radio silence" on the student protests. Finally speaking out on the NEET problem, the former AAP leader-turned-BJP MP is well-known for bringing up concerns pertaining to students, the middle class, education, and gig workers. The young leader, who

switched to the BJP from AAP recently, said his role changed after the political switch. "Earlier, when I was in the Opposition, it was my job to raise questions, and I did it honestly. Now I am on the treasury benches, so my role has changed. My responsibility is no longer to ask questions but to provide solutions," he said while speaking during the debate in Rajya Sabha on the new law against paper leaks. Chadha added that he does not need headlines or to "mark attendance" by speaking in front of cameras, but rather wants results. "I had made a promise to myself that I would speak about the matter in Parliament only when we could bring a solution and when the system was being fixed. And today is that historic day when the system

is being fixed," he said. Praising the government's move to bring in a stricter law against paper leaks, Chadha said: "Just like cancer cannot be treated with Crocin, the paper leak menace cannot be controlled by mere soundbites. We need institutional reform, which our government has initiated." Chadha also applauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for responding to the students' demands. "To every NEET student watching this: your anger is justified, your pain is real, your complaint against the system is genuine. When you voiced your concerns, the Hon'ble Prime Minister heard it, not just as a PM but as a guardian, just as the head of a family listens." "Students demanded, government acted, and historic decisions have been taken," he stated.

After criticism, FIFA clarifies its USD 4.2 billion investment plan

New Delhi: Football's governing body has released an official explanation in response to international outcry over a plan to accept commercial investment into FIFA. The statement defends the planned FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) in response to substantial public and regional confederation opposition after media disclosures earlier in the week. FIFA revealed a few days ago that it will establish a commercial company to oversee its major events, including as the World Cup and Club World Cup. Under a plan that President Gianni Infantino said would "turbocharge the development of the game globally" by raising up to USD 4.2 billion, the subsidiary would be accessible to minority private investment. But politicians and sports organizations throughout the world quickly criticized the plan, with UEFA threatening to boycott next FIFA tournaments. Prior to publicly rejecting the plan in a statement on Thursday, CONCACAF, which represents football in North, Central America, and the Caribbean, had previously stated that it was "deeply concerned by the lack of due process". FIFA acknowledged the "feedback and concern aired in public"—including from regional confederations—in its lengthy response and reiterated its commitment to a "open and democratic consultation."

Vijay's "Jana Nayagan" in Karnataka is hit by Cauvery protests, and theaters cancel performances

New Delhi, July 31: Thalapathy Vijay's film "Jana Nayagan" has been affected in Karnataka by protests by pro-Kannada parties about the delivery of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu. As a precaution, a number of theaters have taken down Vijay's posters and stopped showing the movie. Due to demonstrations by pro-Kannada groups and farmers, several theaters around the state have canceled "Jana Nayagan" performances. The delivery of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu has sparked massive demonstrations in Karnataka. After its July 23 release, "Jana Nayagan" debuted in between 125 and 150 theaters throughout Karnataka, including around 75 single-screen theaters and about 50 multiplex theaters. As the Cauvery protests gathered momentum, several theatre owners voluntarily suspended screenings to avoid any law and order issues. Staff at some theatres also removed Vijay's posters and banners from the premises. At Bengaluru's Urvashi Theatre, screenings of 'Jana Nayagan' were halted following a police advisory. Theatre staff removed the film's posters and cut-outs, and the scheduled shows were replaced with the Kannada film 'Karavali'. Police personnel have been deployed outside Urvashi Theatre as a precautionary measure to prevent any untoward incidents while the Cauvery protests continue across Karnataka.



In Mandya, pro-Kannada activists removed promotional banners of 'Jana Nayagan' amid escalating tensions over the Cauvery water-sharing dispute. The action followed Tamil Nadu's demand for Cauvery water release, as protests continue across Karnataka over the issue. The Karnataka Film Chamber has also called for a meeting over the cancellations. The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) upheld the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's (CWRC) recommendation to release 3,500 cusecs of water daily to Tamil Nadu for 15 days. Kannada organisations and farmers opposed the release

of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu, arguing that Karnataka itself is facing a water shortage and that releasing water would adversely affect the state's farmers. Congress MP from Tamil Nadu Karti Chidambaram has called for the full implementation of the Cauvery Board's order. "We are adamant that the Cauvery Management Board exists and that its decisions must be carried out. That's where we stand. In Tamil Nadu, we are absolutely clear that the Cauvery Management Board's arrangement, agreement, and decision must be fully executed," he stated.

Coach-husband Ravinder shares an emotional story as Seema Kaliramna wins bronze at CWG 2026

Glasgow: In the middle of the jubilant applause that followed Indian discus thrower Seema Kaliramna's bronze medal-winning performance at the Commonwealth Games 2026, her husband and personal coach, Ravinder, talked candidly about the emotional struggle while their four-year-old son, Rudra, remained in India. At the Scotstoun Stadium, Seema, 27, won her first major international gold with a podium finish and a best performance of 58.65 meters. Beneath the podium grandeur, though, was a very personal tale of sacrifice and a last-minute rush to reach Glasgow. "We missed our son a lot," Ravinder told reporters after the event. "He could not come because he did not have a passport, and my own travel was uncertain until the last moment. My visa was approved only on the evening of the 28th, and I flew here on the 29th, so it was not possible to bring him along. However, he watched the event from home. When I called home, he said that he slept 2 minutes ago. He is not used to waking up late," Ravinder told IANS. Speaking to IANS after the medal win, Seema, who dedicated her medal to her husband for his constant mentorship and support throughout her career and post-motherhood comeback, echoed similar feelings. "My son is at home. I miss him a lot. Whenever I talk about my son, those emotions



come out again and again. Now I will go home and meet him." Seema also opened up about her struggles with employment and financial stability, revealing that age limit often prevents mature athletes from landing government jobs. "I tried for a job earlier, but I did not get it. Now I am 27 years old, and according to the criteria, there is an age limit of 25 years," Seema said. "I don't have any financial support, and that remains a big barrier. If I had a job, it would be extremely helpful." Despite the career hurdles, the mother and PhD scholar acknowledged the backing she receives from corporate and sports institutions. "AFI (Athletics Federation of India) is supporting me a lot. SAI (Sports Authority of India) is supporting me a lot, and I am currently practicing at NCOE

Patiala. JSW is also supporting me a lot. If I need anything else, my family arranges it for me," she shared. Making an appeal to policymakers and sports administrators, Seema stressed that winning an international medal comes after a lot of sacrifices and overcoming mental and financial hurdles. "If a child shows interest in sports and wants to pursue it, please support them. If you can support an institute or a corporate partner, please help them. A player has to go through a lot before winning a medal; they face so many difficulties," she stated. "There is a lot of compromise behind every success; financial constraints, mental health, dietary supplements... You have to manage all of this to improve your game and performance," the discus thrower continued.

The Million-Dollar Position of Harsha Bhogle While Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Becomes Vice-Captain



Bangalore: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was unexpectedly named as the vice-captain for the forthcoming Duleep Trophy 2026–2027 domestic season by the East Zone selectors. Many were shocked to see the 15-year-old Sooryavanshi given such a significant

role at such an early point of his career, with Ishan Kishan heading the team. While some fans and experts applauded the choice, others found it difficult to comprehend the reasoning behind the audacious move. Harsha Bhogle, an Indian analyst, was one of

many who questioned the reasoning of giving the youthful prodigy a leadership position, especially in the red-ball format where he hasn't yet performed well. Even securing a place in the East Zone squad was a major milestone for Sooryavanshi, marking another step in his rapid rise following standout performances in the IPL and international cricket. The youngster is now set for an extended run in red-ball cricket—a format where he is arguably at the bottom of his learning curve. "I wonder what the thinking is behind making Sooryavanshi vice-captain of a senior red-ball team. He has played 12 innings for 207 runs @ 17.25. His talent is extraordinary, but there is a learning curve, and he is at the bottom of it in red-ball cricket," Bhogle posted on X (formerly Twitter). Sooryavanshi is expected to open the batting alongside seasoned

Bengal batter Abhimanyu Easwaran. Despite his developing reputation in white-ball cricket, Sooryavanshi has minimal first-class experience, having played eight matches and scored 207 runs, with a maximum score of 93. The Duleep Trophy will offer the left-hander an opportunity to further establish himself in the longer format. The squad also features experienced India pacers Mohammed Shami and Mukesh Kumar, adding weight to the bowling attack. Ishan Kishan (captain), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (vice-captain), Abhimanyu Easwaran, Sudip Gharani, Mohammed Shami, Mukesh Kumar, Shahbaz Ahmed, Suraj Jaiswal, Virat Singh, Kumar Kushagra, Shikhar Mohan, Subhranshu Senapati, Abhijit Sarkar, Anukul Roy, and Denish Das make up the East Zone team.

Kiran George, Tanvi Sharma, Devika Sihag, and Unnati Hooda advance to the Taipei Open quarterfinals



Taipei: Together with seasoned competitor Kiran George, rising players Unnati Hooda, Tanvi Sharma, and Devika Sihag qualified to the Taipei Open Super 300 badminton competition quarterfinals on Thursday. In just 32 minutes, the seasoned Kiran defeated fellow countryman Tharun Manneapalli 21-15 21-16 to secure his

spot in the round of eight. The 25-year-old, who won the 2022 Odisha Open, the 2023 Indonesia Masters, and the 2023 Odisha Masters, will next take against Japan's fourth-seeded Yudai Okimoto. In women's singles, third seed Unnati, the former Odisha Masters champion, defeated compatriot Tanya Hemant 21-19 21-12 in an

all-Indian contest. Teenager Tanvi, one of India's brightest emerging talents, edged past Indonesia's Thalita Ramadhani Wiryanan 21-17 22-20, while eighth seed Devika beat Indonesia's Ni Kadek Dhinda Amartya Pratiwi 21-16 21-15. Unnati and Devika are now set for an all-Indian quarterfinal, ensuring India at least one semifinalist in the women's singles, while Tanvi will take on fourth seed Supanida Katethong of Thailand. However, it was the end of the road for senior pro HS Pranoy and promising youngster Anmol Kharb. Seventh seed Pranoy suffered a 9-21 19-21 defeat to Hong Kong's Jason Gunawan in 39 minutes, while Anmol lost 10-21 20-21 to local second seed Lin Hsiang Ti.

Argentina says ‘not welcome’ amid Lionel Messi World Cup hate storm controversy

New Delhi: Argentina has introduced sweeping new immigration powers after the fallout from its 1-0 defeat to Spain in the FIFA World Cup final triggered a wave of hostility towards the country and its citizens. On Thursday, July 31, President Javier Milei signed an emergency decree allowing authorities to deny entry to or expel foreigners accused of promoting hatred or discrimination against Argentines because of their nationality. The decree comes after weeks of criticism over controversial refereeing decisions that fuelled claims FIFA had favoured Lionel Messi and Argentina during the World Cup. The backlash soon spread beyond football, with Argentine fans, players and even the country’s society becoming targets of online abuse and criticism. “In light of recent displays of hostility toward the Argentine



Republic and Argentines, the national government reaffirms that the defence of the nation, its citizens and its symbols is non-negotiable,” Milei’s office said. “Anyone who attacks the Argentine Republic is not welcome in our country.” The measure expands Argentina’s immigration law by allowing authorities to deny entry, revoke visas or deport foreigners found to have promoted hatred against Argentines through spoken or written statements or by desecrating national symbols. The

government, however, said the rules would not apply to political, academic or civic criticism protected under the country’s Constitution. The controversy surrounding Argentina’s World Cup campaign escalated after the team lost 1-0 to Spain in the final. Questions over refereeing decisions throughout the tournament had already sparked accusations that FIFA favoured Argentina, while the team’s aggressive style of play and the behaviour of some supporters drew widespread criticism.

Indian strikers stress chemistry and consistency on road to FIH World Cup

New Delhi: From chemistry and consistency to teamwork and relentless preparation, creating an attacking move hinges on the finishing touch. A near-miss or creating a goal out of nothing is often the difference between a win and a defeat in modern hockey. That’s where the synchronisation between the forward line comes into play. The FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium and Netherlands 2026 begins in just over a fortnight’s time, with the Indian men’s and women’s teams giving the final touches to their preparations. India News Portal Putting the spotlight on the strikers of the Indian Men’s Team ahead of the show-piece tournament, Mandeep Singh, Abhishek and Shila-



nand Lakra reflected on the qualities that define India’s forward line. Set to play in his fourth FIH World Cup, Mandeep has grown into one of the leaders of India’s forward line. Having ben-

efitted from the guidance of senior players earlier in his career, the experienced striker now embraces the responsibility of sharing those learnings with the next generation as India builds to-

wards another FIH World Cup campaign. “When I was younger, I used to ask a lot of questions to the senior players. I learnt a great deal from them, and now I try to pass on those experiences

to the younger forwards. We talk about handling pressure, staying calm and making the right decisions in big matches,” he said as quoted by a Hockey India press release.

Ashwin reveals 2027 World Cup picks, backs veteran pacer return

Mumbai: Former Indian spinner Ravichandran Ashwin wants veteran out-of-favour Indian pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar in the squad for the 2027 ICC Cricket World Cup, to be co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Bhuvneshwar last represented India in November 2022 in the T20I format, and last played an ODI during the same year. Since then, the team management has moved on from him due to his history of injuries and age not being by his side, currently aged 36. If the ‘Swing King’ of India plays the 2027 ODI World Cup, he will be 37 years of age and the senior-most pacer in the squad. Speak-

ing in a video posted on ESPNcricinfo’s YouTube, Ashwin said, “Bhuvneshwar Kumar is a yes. I would communicate to him. Get him to play all the tournaments, first-class, Vijay Hazare, everything, and get him prime going to South Africa. I think we will need him there.” Notably, in 13 international appearances in South Africa, Bhuvneshwar has taken 19 wickets at an average of 35.26, with best figures of 5/24. Only two of these 19 wickets have come in ODIs, in eight appearances.

The veteran’s recent red-hot run with back-to-back Indian Premier League (IPL) champions Roy-



al Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) this season is hard

to ignore, as he thrived in high-scoring conditions

with his traditional Test match style of bowling,

Yorkers and swing, ending as the second-highest wicket-taker with 28 wickets in 16 matches at an average of 17.89, with an economy rate of 7.95. In 121 ODIs, Bhuvneshwar has taken 141 wickets at an average of 35.11 and an economy rate of 5.08, with best figures of 5/42. Overall in 229 international matches, he has taken 294 wickets.

Ashwin also chose his 2027 WC squad, giving a yes to legends Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli and also the core stars Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, ODI skipper Shubman Gill, Axar Patel, Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah. Two youngsters who received a thumbs up

from Ashwin were pacer Harshit Rana, whose height, ability to hit the deck, pace and batting could be handy in testing South African conditions and wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan. The legendary all-rounder picked up Kuldeep Yadav as his main spinner and picked Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj to lead the pace pack with Bhuvneshwar. Ashwin was not sure about some players’ selection for the squad, with players being opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Varun Chakaravathy, his long-time partner-in-spin Ravindra Jadeja, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammad Shami, Arshdeep Singh, and

Prasidh Krishna. Among the names he said ‘No’ to were wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson, India’s T20I sensation Abhishek Sharma, star wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, Ravi Bishnoi, all-rounder Shivam Dube and pacers Prince Yadav, and Gurnoor Brar.

Easwaran, the most experienced player in the 15-member squad with more than 100 first-class appearances, will be keen to rediscover his best after falling out of the Indian A setup late last year. Jharkhand’s Shikhar Mohan, who impressed with 613 runs in his maiden Ranji Trophy season, has been included as the reserve opener.

Javelin final preview: Neeraj faces doubts amid elite field, Glasgow weather

Glasgow: The Commonwealth Games final resembles an Olympic podium relocated to Glasgow. Four Olympic medallists. One, Rumesh Pathirage, who looks a lock to join that club at the next Olympics. Among this star-studded field stands Neeraj Chopra and his two compatriots. Neeraj couldn’t have asked for a better field to prove he is still the man to beat. And he couldn’t have asked for a better venue to prove he remains one of the masters of tackling foul conditions. After the lows of an injury-marred eighth-place finish at last year’s World Championships, and after parting ways with the legendary Jan Zelezny, Neeraj chose a reset. He brought back his first coach, Jai Chaudhary, the man who put a javelin



in his hand at Panipat’s Shivaji Stadium years before the medals started arriving, into a coaching set-up he now runs entirely on his own terms. He began the season in Doha after a lengthy injury layoff with a commendable

fourth-place finish. Yes, the numbers are there and making headlines, as they always do with Neeraj.

For once, they aren’t the records he breaks at will. These are numbers that have planted seeds of doubt: whether

he is past his prime. At the World Championships last year, Neeraj finished outside the podium in a competitive event for the first time in 2,566 days. In Glasgow on Thursday, he managed a best throw of just 79.61m, the

first time he hasn’t cleared 80m in a competition in eight years, ending a streak stretching back 58 competitions. But at this juncture of his career, with Neeraj working out what still works for a body that is no longer 25, the two-time Olympic medallist knows exactly what he is doing. At no point can anyone tell he is doubting himself, and that is the quiet greatness of one of India’s greatest athletes. Having trained extensively with his new, old team, Neeraj timed his return well in Doha. His presence at these Commonwealth Games is itself a small surprise, given how many expected him to plan his season carefully around the Asian Games and the newly minted Ultimate World Athletics Championships later this year.

Bumrah clears fitness test, set for Sri Lanka Test series

New Delhi: India received a major boost ahead of the upcoming Test series against Sri Lanka after pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was declared fit to play both matches. According to PTI, the fast bowler has been cleared by the BCCI’s Centre of Excellence (COE) in Bengaluru after recovering from the impact injury he sustained during the ODI series against England. Bumrah had missed the third ODI at Lord’s after picking up the injury and was included in India’s Test squad subject to clearing his fitness assessment. His availability comes as a timely relief for a side already dealing with multiple injury concerns ahead of the two-Test series beginning in Galle on August 15. “Jasprit Bumrah has recovered from his impact injury. He has cleared the fitness Tests mandated by the COE. Hopefully



he will be available for both games as he is integral to the team’s plans,” a senior BCCI official told PTI on condition of anonymity. Bumrah’s return significantly strengthens India’s pace attack at a crucial stage of the World Test Championship cycle. Led by Shubman Gill, India currently sit fifth in the WTC standings,

one place above Sri Lanka, and need victories to stay in the race for a place in the 2027 final. The visitors need to win seven of their remaining nine Tests to remain in contention, making a 2-0 series victory in Sri Lanka particularly important before a challenging away assignment in New Zealand later this year.

Europe threatens FIFA World Cup boycott over privatisation plans

New Delhi: The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and its 55 member associations have unanimously voted to boycott the FIFA World Cup and all other FIFA competitions if world football’s governing body proceeds with its controversial proposal to sell minority stakes in a subsidiary that would manage its global tournaments. The decision, taken during a virtual meeting on Thursday, marks a dramatic escalation in the growing opposition to FIFA President Gianni Infantino’s plan to create a 20 billion US Dollar subsidiary to oversee the commercial rights of the World Cup and other FIFA competitions.

FIFA intends to offer up to 20 per cent ownership in the entity to external investors while retaining majority control. In a strongly worded statement, UEFA said its member associations had unanimously rejected the proposal, warning that European national teams would stay away from FIFA events unless the plan was scrapped. “No UEFA national teams will participate in any FIFA competition for so long as these proposals remain alive, unless this proposal has been abandoned in its entirety and binding assurances have been given that FIFA will never again open its governance or competitions to private ownership,” UEFA said. The European governing

body insisted that football’s biggest tournament could not be treated as a commercial asset. “The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product. It is one of football’s greatest sporting legacies. It has been built over generations by players, national teams and supporters across every continent. “No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale.” England’s Football Association backed UEFA’s position, with an FA spokesperson saying the organisation “stands shoulder to shoulder with our European colleagues.” The backlash against FIFA’s proposal has spread beyond Europe. Earlier this week, the Asian Foot-



ball Confederation (AFC) criticised FIFA for failing to consult its member associations before announcing the plan. AFC president Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa described the lack of consultation, along with the ab-

sence of detailed governance, financial and legal analysis, as “totally unacceptable.” CONCACAF, the governing body for North America, Central America and the Caribbean, also questioned FIFA’s decision-making process, saying

member associations had not been adequately consulted before the proposal was unveiled. The African confederation is expected to discuss the issue at an executive committee meeting next week, while Oceania’s governing body will deliberate on the proposal next month. South American governing body CONMEBOL has yet to publicly state its position. FIFA announced earlier this week that it plans to establish a new commercial subsidiary valued at around 20 billion US Dollars to manage the World Cup and its other competitions. The governing body plans to sell minority stakes of up to 20 per cent to external investors while retaining majority

ownership and operational control. As part of the proposal, FIFA has offered significantly increased financial distributions to its 211 member associations. Each association would receive US\$40 million if the proposal is approved by September 19. If rejected, the payout would revert to the previously proposed US\$10 million per association. Infantino has maintained that the proposal will ultimately be decided through a vote of FIFA’s member associations before being considered by the FIFA Council.

Former Liberty Media chief executive Greg Maffei, who is advising FIFA on the project, defended the proposal, saying FIFA was not “selling

the World Cup” and would continue to retain majority control of its competitions. The controversy comes with several major FIFA tournaments on the horizon, including the 2027 Women’s World Cup in Brazil and the inaugural Under-15 World Cup in Azerbaijan later this year. With UEFA threatening to pull all of its national teams from FIFA competitions and other confederations voicing similar concerns over governance and transparency, FIFA now faces mounting pressure to convince its member associations that the proposal will safeguard the future of the world’s biggest football tournaments rather than fundamentally change them.