

Khandu pitches for coffee expansion to boost farmers' incomes

Itanagar, Oct 05: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has called for a concerted, strategic push to expand coffee cultivation across the state, highlighting its potential to transform rural livelihoods, boost farmers' incomes, and establish the state as a major hub for premium specialty coffee.

Addressing a state-level coffee development workshop titled "Hills to Cup" in Itanagar, organised by the Coffee Board of India in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Khandu emphasized that Arunachal Pradesh possesses



ideal agro-climatic conditions for producing high-grade Arabica and Robusta varieties. The Chief Minister pointed out that traditional slash-and-burn farming, or jhum cultivation, can be effectively re-

placed with sustainable coffee plantations, which protect the region's delicate biodiversity while offering long-term financial stability to local farming communities.

To achieve large-scale com-

mercial success, Khandu urged state agricultural departments, technical research institutions, and the Coffee Board to work in close coordination. He highlighted the necessity of providing comprehensive end-to-end support to indigenous growers, including high-quality saplings, modern processing equipment, post-harvest infrastructure, and direct market linkage mechanisms. "Coffee is not merely an agricultural crop; it represents a high-value commercial opportunity that can drive sustainable economic growth across our hill districts," Khandu stated.

Mangkolemba gives Nagaland Govt. deadline on hall row

Kohima, Oct 05: Residents of Mangkolemba in Mokokchung district have issued a strict 30-day ultimatum to the Nagaland government to resolve the ongoing controversy surrounding the Multipurpose Hall project, setting November 2 as the final deadline.

The decisive ultimatum was adopted during a massive public general meeting held at the Nokyu Ward public ground following the expiry of an earlier 20-day notice that went unheeded by state authorities. Citizens unanimously rejected any alternative arrangements or negotiated compromises, insisting that the government

construct the ₹2.71-crore Khelo India multipurpose hall strictly within Mangkolemba town as per original official records.

The public gathering also demanded the immediate revocation of the completion certificate issued by the local Additional Deputy Commissioner on July 2, declaring it "null and void" due to procedural irregularities. Furthermore, attendees called for the resignations of Tourism and Higher Education Minister Temjen Imna Along and Sports and Youth Resources Advisor S. Keoshu Yimchunger, demanding strict legal accountability for those involved in relocating

or mismanaging the project. The Nagaland Lokayukta is currently examining the alleged administrative irregularities surrounding the project's execution. Local civil society organisations warned that if the state government fails to take decisive corrective action before the November 2 deadline, residents will initiate intense democratic agitations across Mokokchung district. Controversy erupted after civil society groups discovered that the Rs 2.71-crore facility was built 18 km away in Longtho village, allegedly within minister Temjen Imna Along's private residence.

Congress, NDA spar over video clip

Amaravati, Oct 05: A political row erupted between the Congress and the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over a viral video clip showing a brief interruption to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's address in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh.

The incident occurred during the foundation stone laying ceremony for the ₹1-lakh-crore Global Horticulture Hub and the Indian School of Agriculture. Sharing the clip on social media platform X, General Secretary in-charge of Communications for the Congress, Jairam Ramesh, claimed that public frustration over unemployment forced Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu to step in and silence the crowd after attendees allegedly raised slogans demanding jobs. Refuting the allegations, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman clarified that the crowd's reaction reflected genuine excitement and party workers' enthusiasm to interact with their leaders rather than public anger. Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh and state BJP leaders accused the Congress of circulating fabricated narratives and demanded the withdrawal of the misleading posts.

Guwahati Rongmei community celebrates annual cultural freshers' meet

Guwahati, Oct 05: The Rongmei community in Guwahati celebrated its 8th Cultural-cum-Freshers' Meet 2026 (Charuangekhahnei Zawthanh Kariumei) with vibrant festivities at the Railway Community Hall in Maligaon, under the central theme "Roots to Relevance".

The event was jointly organized by the Rongmei Phwam, Guwahati (RPG) and the Rongmei Chammac Phwam Guwahati (RCPG), drawing widespread participation from Rongmei residents across the city alongside newly arrived students and working professionals. Nilmani Brahma, Principal Chief Engineer of Northeast



Frontier Railway, attended the gathering as chief guest, encouraging youth to stay connected to their heritage while pursuing academic and professional excellence. The program showcased the rich

cultural heritage of the Rongmei tribe through traditional dance performances, folk songs, a display of indigenous attire, and cultural acts including Huai kaucmei and Pazeicmei.

Arunachal to add two medical colleges; TRIHMS seats doubled

Itanagar, Oct 05: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu announced that two new medical colleges are being established in the state under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, alongside doubling the annual MBBS intake at Tomo Riba Institute of Health & Medical Sciences (TRIHMS) from 50 to 100 seats.

Speaking during an official event, the Chief Minister highlighted the state government's overarching strategy to significantly strengthen healthcare delivery networks, expand clinical infrastructure, and scale up tertiary medical education options across



eastern and western regions of Arunachal Pradesh. The expansion of MBBS capacity at TRIHMS, located in Na-

harlagun, marks a milestone in boosting local intake capacity, allowing a larger quota of native students to pursue profes-

sional medical careers within their home state.

Outlining the expansion roadmap, Khandu detailed that the state's second medical college is set to be established in Namsai at an estimated cost of ₹356.60 crore, leveraging the existing district hospital infrastructure through public-private collaboration. The third proposed medical institute will follow shortly after in Pasighat, creating balanced geographic coverage across key population hubs. Selection processes for private partner entities to execute the Namsai project are already underway under strict state and Union Ministry of Health guidelines.

Arunachal BJP defends poll body

Itanagar, Oct 05: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) unit in Arunachal Pradesh has strongly rejected opposition criticism regarding the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, terming allegations of institutional bias and large-scale voter deletion completely misleading and politically motivated.

Addressing a press conference in Itanagar, senior state party leaders, including spokesperson Tobom Dai and party official Tarh Tarak, asserted full confidence in the autonomous functioning of the ECI. The leadership highlighted that the SIR exercise is a routine, legally mandated administrative process designed specifically to purify voter databases by identifying duplicate entries, removing deceased voters, and updating addresses for relocated citizens. The state ruling party urged political groups to refrain from undermining constitutional institutions without verified facts or documentary evidence. Responding to allegations made by Congress and other opposition parties that the poll panel favors the ruling coalition, BJP leaders cited electoral outcomes across various states where opposition alliances have won key elections.

Tourism awareness programme held at Lephori village

Kohima, Oct 05: The Department of Tourism, Government of Nagaland, conducted a specialized one-day "Tourism Awareness Training cum Sensitisation Programme" at Lephori village in Phek district on October 4, aiming to equip local stakeholders with skills for sustainable and community-driven rural tourism.

Organized as part of the state's broader strategy to promote eco-tourism and rural hospitality in remote border regions, the outreach program focused on capacity building, cultural preservation, and unlocking livelihood opportunities for indigenous youth. Department officials and resource persons interacted with village elders,



local leaders, self-help group representatives, and youth groups, detailing how community-led initiatives can foster economic self-reliance while preserving Nagaland's rich heritage and natural landscapes.

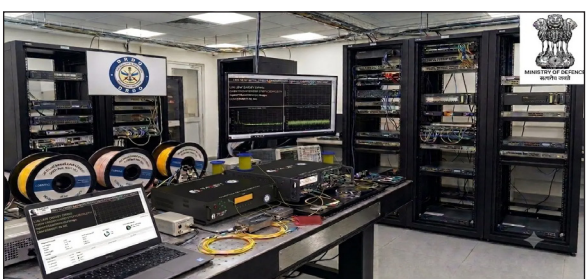
During the interactive sessions, experts highlighted core aspects of basic hospitality, home-stay operations, eco-guide training, hygienic food safety, and tour packaging tailored for domestic and international visitors.

India achieves breakthrough 5.56-km free-space Quantum Key Distribution link

BREAKTHROUGH ADVANCES SOVEREIGN QUANTUM SECURITY

Ahmedabad, Oct 05: In a major milestone for sovereign cybersecurity and defense communications, India has successfully demonstrated its first 5.56-kilometer free-space Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) link, establishing a tamper-proof optical communication channel through open air.

The field trial was executed overnight between the Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applica-



tions and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar campus. The breakthrough was achieved

through a joint collaboration involving deep-tech pioneer QNu Labs, BISAG-N, and IIT Gandhinagar, marking a critical step forward under the

National Quantum Mission. During the trial, the transmission maintained a stable Quantum Bit Error Rate (QBER) below 5 percent while generating secure cryptographic keys at a steady rate of 230 to 260 bits per second. To overcome atmospheric turbulence, dust, and optical drift over the 5.56-km line-of-sight distance, the team deployed QNu Labs' advanced Pointing, Acquisition, and Tracking (PAT) system.

Arunachal Pradesh explores geothermal energy for remote border regions

Itanagar, Oct 05: Arunachal Pradesh is actively assessing the feasibility of harnessing geothermal energy to supply clean, reliable, and decentralized electricity to its remote high-altitude regions and strategic border posts.

Science and Technology Minister Dasanglu Pul led a high-level official delegation, accompanied by geologists from the Centre for Earth Sciences and Himalayan Studies (CESHS) led by Director Tana Tage, to review the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's (ONGC) pioneer geothermal initiative at Puga Valley in Ladakh. The benchmark study tour aimed



to examine drilling technologies, reservoir management techniques, and operational frameworks suited for sub-zero Himalayan conditions. Experience gained from Ladakh's high-altitude extraction

model is expected to provide essential technical inputs for executing deep-drilling operations across northern frontier sectors.

Preliminary scientific investigations and geophysical mapping have identified significant geothermal manifestations within the Mago-Thingbu thermal belt in Tawang district, alongside promising sites at Damteng, Tsechu, and Dirang. The state government estimates an initial power generation capacity between 10 MW and 15 MW across these identified geothermal springs. Surface structural surveys, geochemical water analysis, and subsur-

face characterization studies are currently being conducted in technical collaboration with national energy giants including Oil India Limited. Beyond utility-scale electricity generation, the administration is evaluating direct thermal applications such as space heating for civilian settlements, military outposts, agricultural drying, and greenhouse cultivation during harsh winters. Developing locally generated, continuous geothermal power addresses chronic grid connectivity bottlenecks, reduces heavy reliance on fossil fuels, and enhances long-term energy security across vulnerable border outposts.

SC to hear petitions seeking CEC's suspension today

New Delhi, Oct 05: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a batch of petitions challenging decisions taken by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and seeking his suspension pending a full judicial review.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, alongside Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana, will hear the matters. The petitions—filed by advocate Rakesh Kumar Singh and lawyer



Shailendra Mani Tripathi—allege unprecedented constitutional fractures within the Election Commission of India (ECI). The filings contend that the CEC exercised unilateral decision-making authority in executing the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) drive without the con-

currence of fellow Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi. The petitions seek an interim order restraining Kumar from discharging his duties as CEC to safeguard the multi-member character of the poll panel. They also demand the quashing of at least 14 directives, guidelines, and software modifications—including alterations to ERONet databases—allegedly issued without majority board approval.

Seventeen days after Shillong businessman's alleged Dimapur robbery, police make zero arrests

Dimapur, Oct 05: Seventeen days after a Shillong-based businessman was allegedly targeted, rendered unconscious, and robbed in broad daylight, law enforcement authorities in Dimapur have made no arrests, raising growing concerns among

local business communities over urban security. The incident occurred on September 18 near the Town Hall area, a busy commercial zone in Dimapur. According to police statements and preliminary reports, the victim reportedly lost consciousness under

mysterious circumstances before perpetrators stole his valuables, cash, and personal belongings. After regaining consciousness, the trader lodged a formal complaint with the local police, initiating an investigation into suspected drugging or mug-

ging by organized criminal elements operating across inter-state trade corridors. Addressing public inquiries regarding slow progress in the high-profile case, Dimapur Police confirmed that a formal investigation remains actively underway. Inves-

tigators have collected and audited surveillance camera footage from multiple commercial establishments and traffic intersections surrounding Town Hall in an attempt to reconstruct the timeline and track the movement of potential suspects. Special in-

vestigation teams are analyzing facial recognition inputs and monitoring local intelligence networks to identify the perpetrators. However, the complete absence of suspects or preliminary detentions more than two weeks after the crime has drawn criticism

from regional trade bodies and civic groups. Representatives from local business associations expressed alarm over safety along key commercial arteries connecting Nagaland with neighboring northeastern states, emphasizing that unresolved crimes against

visiting entrepreneurs damage commercial confidence and inter-state trade relations. Police officials maintained that technical surveillance efforts are being intensified, reassuring the public that all efforts are underway to apprehend the culprits involved.

71-Year-Old Patient Missing From GMCH, Family Files Police Complaint

Dispur, Oct 05: A 71-year-old man undergoing treatment at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) has been reported missing since midnight on October 4, prompting his family to lodge a police complaint and appeal to the public for help in tracing him.

The missing patient has been identified as Abul Husen, a resident of Herapati in Assam's Nagaon district. Husen had travelled to Guwahati for medical treatment after experiencing an eye-related ailment and was admitted to the eye department of GMCH on Saturday. According to his family, Husen was undergoing treatment at the hospital when he went missing. His sudden disappearance has caused concern among his relatives, who have been trying to locate him and have sought assistance from the authorities. Following the incident, the family approached the police and reported Husen missing. Authorities have been requested to investigate the circumstances surrounding his disappearance and take steps to trace his whereabouts. The family has also appealed to members of the public to come forward with any information that could help locate the elderly man.



They have urged anyone who may have seen Husen or knows anything about his movements after he went missing to inform the police or contact his family.

The circumstances in which Husen left the hospital remain unclear. His relatives are hoping that information from hospital staff, visitors or members of the public may help establish where he went after he was last seen. The family has urged people in Guwahati and nearby areas to remain alert and share any credible information with the authorities. They are continuing their efforts to trace Husen and bring him back safely. Police are expected to examine available information

and conduct searches as part of efforts to determine the patient's whereabouts. The family has requested that anyone with relevant information cooperate with the investigation and immediately notify the authorities. According to Husen's family, he left the premises of Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) at around midnight and has remained untraced since then. His family members said they have been unable to determine the circumstances in which he left the hospital or establish his whereabouts after leaving the premises. Concerned about his safety, the family approached

Bhangagarh police station and lodged a complaint seeking assistance in locating him. The police station has jurisdiction over the area where GMCH is situated and is expected to handle the case. So far, there has been no official confirmation regarding the steps taken by the police following the complaint. It is also not clear whether a formal search operation has been initiated or whether investigators have obtained any information that could help determine Husen's current location. The circumstances surrounding his disappearance also remain unclear. The family has not been able to establish why he left the hospital at such a late hour or where he may have gone afterwards. His disappearance has caused concern among his relatives, who are seeking urgent assistance to trace him. Hospital authorities have also not issued an official statement explaining how Husen was able to leave the hospital premises or whether any information was available regarding his movement after he left. Details about whether security station. The family is hoping that information from members of the public will help authorities trace him at the earliest.

Paul Raises Questions Over Metbah's Tenth Schedule Stand

Shillong , Oct 05: The political dispute within Meghalaya's United Democratic Party (UDP) intensified on Sunday, with party working president Paul Lyngdoh continuing his criticism of UDP president Metbah Lyngdoh over the issue of legislators joining the BJP. Paul Lyngdoh said Metbah Lyngdoh would be the "best person" to explain why he is now seeking action against legislators who have switched allegiance to the BJP, despite having taken a different position on a similar political defection case when he served as the Speaker of the Meghalaya Assembly in 2021. Referring to the present controversy, Paul Lyngdoh pointed to Metbah's decision in 2021 to recognise the merger of 12 Congress legislators with the Trinamool Congress under provisions of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.

He argued that the decision had established a precedent and questioned why Metbah was now seeking action in circumstances that, according to him, appeared to be contrary to that earlier position. "I think he would be the best person to answer that question because he had done something which had set a precedent, and now he wants to do something which is against the precedent which he has set," Paul Lyngdoh said. The comments came as the UDP sought to clarify its position following the decision of eight of its 12 legislators to join the BJP. The eight MLAs travelled to New Delhi on September 23 and joined the BJP, representing exactly two-thirds of the

UDP's strength in the Meghalaya Assembly.

The legislators subsequently submitted a letter concerning the merger to the Assembly Secretariat on Friday. In the absence of Assembly Speaker Thomas A. Sangma, the documents were received by Adviser (Legislation) Andrew Simons.

The matter will now be examined by the Speaker under the provisions of the Tenth Schedule, which contains the anti-defection provisions of the Constitution. The interpretation of the schedule could become central to determining whether the legislators' move qualifies as a protected merger or attracts disqualification. The current dispute has drawn comparisons with a similar controversy that unfolded in Meghalaya in 2021. At that time, Metbah Lyngdoh was serving as Speaker of the Assembly when petitions were filed by the Congress seeking the disqualification of 12 of its 17 legislators after they joined the Trinamool Congress. Metbah, acting as Speaker, rejected the disqualification petitions. He held that the merger of the Congress Legislature Party with the TMC was protected under Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule because the group involved more than two-thirds of the Congress legislators in the Assembly.

The decision at the time was based on the constitutional provision governing mergers, which provides protection from disqualification when the required proportion of legislators agrees to merge with another political party. The 2021 ruling subsequently

became an important reference point in discussions surrounding defections and mergers in the state. Paul Lyngdoh has now invoked that earlier decision while questioning the position being taken by the UDP leadership in the latest case. His remarks reflect the growing differences within the party over how the movement of its legislators to the BJP should be interpreted under the anti-defection law. The controversy has also led the UDP leadership to emphasise that the party itself has not merged with the BJP.

UDP general secretary Titosstarwell Chyne rejected reports suggesting that the party had formally merged with the BJP and maintained that the organisation would continue to function independently. Chyne said the UDP would retain its existing political identity, including its name, flag and election symbol.

He stressed that the party intended to contest the next Assembly election under the UDP banner. "UDP is UDP. UDP will remain UDP," Chyne said while rejecting suggestions that the movement of the legislators represented the formal merger of the entire party with the BJP. According to Chyne, the UDP's participation in the ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) should be understood as an administrative or political alliance rather than a surrender of the party's independent identity. The BJP, the pthe Assembly could therefore have significant consequences for both the party's legislative strength and its political strategy ahead of the next election.

Oil Security Workers Demand Labour Rights in Assam

Dispur, Oct 05: More than 1,000 oil and gas security workers from Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Charaideo and Sivasagar districts held a mass public meeting in Tingkhong, demanding formal worker status, fair wages and employment security from the oil and gas sector authorities.

The workers, who have been engaged for several years in safeguarding assets of Oil India Limited (OIL), Assam Gas Company Limited (AGCL) and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in remote areas, alleged that they were recently designated as "Oil Security ocratic movement involmployment security. Volunteers" despite performing security-related duties on the ground. The workers have opposed the proposed volunteer designation, saying it would deny them the status and benefits associated with formal employment. They alleged that there is a plan to engage them at.

CoTU Calls Shutdown in Kangpokpi Over Kuki Man's Killing

Imphal, Oct 05: A 24-hour total shutdown called by the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) brought normal life in Manipur's Kangpokpi district to a near standstill on Monday, October 5, following the killing of 71-year-old Hemjang Haokip. The shutdown was called to protest Haokip's death after he was allegedly abducted from his farm hut on October 3.

His killing has triggered anger and grief among members of the Kuki-Zo community, with local groups demanding action and accountability over the incident.

The shutdown came into effect at midnight and affected daily activities across the district. Haokip's body was recovered late on Sunday afternoon after an extensive search operation involving local villagers and security personnel. Following the recovery, the body was taken to the Kangpokpi district headquarters late on Sunday night and was later shifted to Churachandpur, where it was kept at a morgue for preservation. As the shutdown took effect, shops, commercial establishments, private institutions and schools remained closed across Kangpokpi. Government offices were also affected, with normal functioning disrupted in several areas. Public and private transport services were severely impacted as vehicular movement along National Highway-2 was stopped, except for vehicles and essential services covered under the shutdown exemptions. At Bongmol village, volunteers enforcing the

shutdown, many of them women, monitored movement on the roads and stopped vehicles that were not covered by the exemption list. Volunteers also checked documents and other details of vehicles seeking permission to pass through the area. Vehicles carrying media personnel, those involved in medical emergencies and vehicles providing airport-related services were among those seeking exemption from the shutdown restrictions.

Volunteers examined the credentials of such vehicles before allowing them to proceed. Several vehicles travelling along National Highway-2 were tion of protest and mourning. The decision by and highway traffic disrupted, large parts The CoTU shutdown has therefore caused widespread disruption across Kangpokpi while also reflecting the strong reaction within the Kuki-Zo community to the death of the elderly man. With normal activities largely suspended and security forces maintaining heightened vigilance, authorities are keeping a close watch on the situation. Security arrangements were strengthened in the district during the shutdown. Central security forces were deployed at various locations, particularly along National Highway-2, to monitor the situation and prevent any escalation. Security personnel kept a close watch on the movement of people and vehicles while shutdown volunteers enforced the restrictions. Authorities also monitored sensitive areas as the district remained largely closed.

Rail Connectivity Drives Sharp Rise in Mizoram Tourist Arrivals

Aizawl, Oct 05: Mizoram witnessed a significant rise in tourist arrivals this year, with more than 6.75 lakh visitors travelling to the northeastern state between January and August.

Improved connectivity, particularly the expansion of railway infrastructure, has emerged as one of the key factors contributing to the growing tourist footfall. According to official figures, Mizoram recorded 6,75,284 tourist arrivals during the first eight months of the year. Domestic visitors accounted for the overwhelming majority of the total, with 6,64,197 Indian tourists travelling to the state. The number of foreign tourists stood at 11,087 during the same period. The latest figures indicate a notable increase compared with previous years. Mizoram recorded 5,24,784 tourist arrivals during the 2024-25 financial year, including 5,911

international visitors. The number rose substantially to 9,80,618 during 2025-26, according to government data, reflecting the state's growing popularity among travellers. Officials have attributed the rise in visitor numbers partly to improvements in transport infrastructure.

The Bairabi-Sairang railway line has been particularly significant, providing a direct rail connection between Aizawl and the wider national railway network and making the state more accessible to tourists from other parts of India. The 51.38-kilometre railway project was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 13, 2025. The new rail link is expected to make travel to Mizoram more convenient and affordable while strengthening connections between the state and major destinations across the country.

Officials believe better connectivity, combined with the government's efforts to promote Mizoram as an eco-tourism destination, could help sustain the growth in tourist arrivals. The state is known for its scenic landscapes, hills, forests and distinctive cultural traditions, giving it considerable potential to attract visitors seeking nature-based and cultural experiences.

Alongside infrastructure development, the state government has introduced a number of measures aimed at improving tourism services and ensuring greater safety and accountability for visitors. These include the Mizoram Responsible Tourism Policy, 2020, the Mizoram (Registration of Tourist Trade) Act, 2020, and associated rules governing tourism-related activities. The Tourism Department has also been

working with churches and civil society organisations to encourage the development of tourism across different parts of Mizoram. Authorities believe greater cooperation among government agencies, local communities and social organisations can help create a more sustainable tourism ecosystem. The government's renewed focus on tourism was highlighted during the recently concluded three-day Anthurium Festival at Reiek Tourist Resort. The event was organised as part of efforts to promote Mizoram's natural beauty, cultural heritage and local attractions while encouraging visitors to explore destinations beyond Aizawl. Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar said Mizoram needed to expand its touhotels, restaurants, transport operators, guides, handicraft sellers and other businesses that depend on tourism.

Case Registered Over AI-Generated Morphed Image of Himanta Sarma

Dispur, Oct 05: The Assam Chief Minister's Office has raised an alarm over the circulation of an allegedly fabricated and morphed image of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on social media, stating that the picture was digitally manipulated using artificial intelligence.

According to the CMO, the image being circulated online does not represent a genuine photograph and was artificially created and altered. The office said the content was being shared in a manner that could mislead members of the public and create a false impression about the Assam chief minister.

The CMO said a police case has been registered in connection with the creation and circulation of the image. It further stated that authorities have identified the individuals allegedly involved in producing and distributing the manipulated content. In its statement, the Chief Minister's Office said the image had no basis in reality and was deliberately created using artificial intelligence.

The office alleged that the material was circulated with the intention of misleading people and harming the public image and reputation of Himanta Biswa Sarma. The incident has highlighted growing concerns over the use



of artificial intelligence to create and distribute manipulated images on social media. With AI-based image-generation and editing tools becoming increasingly accessible, authorities are facing new challenges in identifying fabricated content and preventing its rapid spread online.

The CMO maintained that the image was not an authentic representation of the chief minister and urged people to exercise caution before believing or sharing such material. The statement

also underscored the potential consequences of deliberately circulating fabricated digital content, particularly damaging Sarma's image. That appropriate legal steps have been initiated in response to its circulation. For social media users, the episode is another reminder that images shared online may not always be authentic. Verification, particularly in cases involving political leaders and sensitive issues, remains important before content is forwarded or republished.

Pala Claims Dhar Offered Rs 20L Amid Vote-Buying Allegations

Shillong , Oct 05: The Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) has accused NPP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar of allegedly using money and intimidation to influence voters. MPCC president Vincent H. Pala claimed that Dhar offered Rs 20 lakh to villagers in exchange for votes and allegedly warned them of consequences if they failed to support the NPP.

Pala said political interference had extended to the grassroots, with elected representatives allegedly becoming involved even in village-level elections. "Now everything is manipulated. In Jandahil, even the election of a headman, even the MLA, ministers will be involved," Pala alleged. He further claimed that the Deputy Chief Minister had visited a village and offered Rs 20 lakh while allegedly telling residents to vote as directed. Pala said he had



spent the previous three to four days in Dhar's constituency and alleged that residents were being pressured over their voting choices.

He is threatening the people to vote for the NPP during the MP election," Pala alleged. The Congress leader criticised what he described as an excessive focus on electoral victories, arguing that winning an election should only mark the beginning of a government's responsibility. He said elected representatives must subsequently ensure effective governance, public services and law and order.

Pala linked the alleged political tactics to broader concerns over the state's governance and security situation. The allegations against Dhar could not be independently verified, and no response from the Deputy Chief Minister was available at the time of reporting. On coal mining, Pala said Meghalaya's coal resources were once again attracting attention but questioned who would ultimately control the industry and benefit financially from it. He said any move to resume mining should be accompanied by clear safeguards,

transparency and a proper mechanism for distributing revenue. "Definitely, there will be benefits, but benefits alone will not help. The safety of people also you have to look upon," Pala said. He questioned whether the financial gains from coal would reach the government and local communities or remain concentrated among a few individuals.

"You may have lots of coal, but who controls that coal?" he asked. Pala also noted that coal deposits are spread across Jaintia Hills, West Khasi Hills and Garo Hills. He questioned whether royalty generated from mining would actually reach the public exchequer and benefit the people. Recalling an earlier BJP promise that mining would resume within 180 days, Pala said such commitments should ultimately be judged by their implementation rather than political announcements.

After Joining the BJP Actor Koel Mallick Files Rajya Sabha Nomination Hours



New Delhi, Oct 05: Rukmini Mallick, also known as Koel Mallick, has filed her nomination as a BJP candidate in the forthcoming Rajya Sabha elections. West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari and the party's state president, Samik Bhattacharya, were there at the time. She had joined the BJP at its state headquarters in Kolkata just hours before, a day after the party fielded her for election in the same seat from which she had previously resigned.

The daughter of legendary Bengali film actor Ranjit Mallick served as a Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP from April 6 to July 16. She resigned after the Mamata Banerjee-led party's electoral defeat in the assembly elections, sparking speculation that she may join the BJP. Koel Mallick filed her nomination in the office of the Assembly's main secretary at Vidhan Sabha Bhavan, according to an official. Mallick was accompanied by Chief Minister Adhikari and Samik Bhattacharya, a Rajya Sabha member, when she presented her nomination papers. Mallick's entry into the BJP and nomination to the Rajya Sabha follows in the footsteps of three former Trinamool leaders, Sukhendy Sekhar Roy, Sushmita Deb, and Prakash Chik Baraik, who resigned from the Trinamool and the Upper House, crossed over to the saffron camp, and were subsequently re-elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha on BJP tickets.In a social media post, the chief minister expressed complete confidence in Mallick's triumph, saying, "I congratulate and offer best wishes to her in advance."Adhikari also gifted Mallick with a framed image of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in his assembly office. Senior ministers Tapas Roy and Sankar Ghosh were also present when Mallick submitted her nomination paper. Elections to 12 Rajya Sabha seats across Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal will be held on October 16. The BJP has a clear majority in the West Bengal Assembly. Koel Mallick accepted the BJP flag from state general

secretary Shashi Agnihotri at the party's state headquarters in Salt Lake amid chants of 'Vande Mataram' on Monday morning before proceeding to file her nomination. Mallick told reporters that she was overwhelmed by the development work done in Bengal over the last several months and had joined the BJP to be a part of it. She praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Adhikari, expressing her desire to serve the people by following in their footsteps. "I'm honored. I've been given a great deal of responsibility. Serving people is a duty that I shall gladly do. I am overwhelmed by the development effort that has commenced in Bengal during the last few months. "This is what Bengal needs the most," she stated. Mallick said she wanted to raise issues that ordinary people faced rather than merely criticise the government from the sidelines. "I've always heard my father at home ask, 'Why is this happening? Why isn't this occurring in the state? As individuals, we have numerous desires and thoughts that we keep private.

This time, I shall discuss those difficulties. It is simple to read a newspaper and say, 'Oh, this was not done', but the actual thing is to go to the field and work on such issues," she remarked. Bengal, according to the actor, need increased access to education, more schools, industrial growth, and investment for genuine development.

Army personnel are among the eight people arrested in connection with the Madras Regiment arms heist

New Delhi, Oct 05: Police believe that four AK-203 rifles, an INSAS rifle, six handguns, and approximately 1,900 rounds of ammunition were stolen from an Army armory in Telangana as part of a plot to acquire weapons for planned robberies. Malkajgiri police stated they had detained eight people, including serving and former Army troops, in connection with the theft from the 20 Battalion, Madras Regiment at Bolarum. They reported that the stolen weapons and ammo had been recovered. On August 31, Army soldiers discovered the Kote and Magazine's locks breached, revealing the theft. Police stated the stolen items included four AK-203 rifles, one INSAS rifle, six 9mm handguns, one civil pistol, three binoculars, and roughly 1,900 rounds of ammo. On September 11, police apprehended Upputholla Mallesh alias Raju and recovered the stolen firearms and ammunition from his father's residence in Sainagar Colony, Achampet, in Telangana's Nagarkurnool district. Police

say Mallesh devised the plan with his cousin Mallikarjun and friend Niranjana, who were allegedly having cash issues.

Investigators believe the trio intended to use the stolen firearms to commit robberies against banks, jewelry stores, and rich persons.

The suspected conspiracy apparently included Mallesh's former Madras Regiment colleagues, Sheshulu, Vinod Kumar, and Praveen. Police claim they assisted in acquiring access to the arsenal and magazine.

Investigators further claimed that Mallesh had contacted Avi Dey alias Obi and Birbal Shaw of West Bengal, who allegedly agreed to buy the stolen army weaponry. Avi Dey alias Obi, 32, of Barrackpore, Kolkata, has been identified by police as a suspected illicit guns supplier. He had a previous Arms Act complaint filed at Khardah Police Station in 2012 under Section 25(1)(B)(a). The matter is currently ongoing before the Second Judicial Magistrate Court in Barrackpore. Birbal

Shaw, 27, also from Barrackpore, maintained a sugarcane juice stand near the Barrackpore Cantonment in Kolkata and was acquainted with Mallesh. Police claim Shaw introduced Mallesh to Avi Dey, via whom Mallesh purchased a country-made handgun and a live bullet for Rs 10,000 in 2022.

According to police, the purported price of the stolen guns and ammunition was negotiated as Rs 3 lakh for pistols and Rs 5 lakh for long weapons, excluding payment for ammo.

Two call centers making fake job offers were busted in Delhi, and eleven people were detained

New Delhi, Oct 05: Delhi Police have busted two alleged fraudulent job-placement call centers in Ranjit Nagar, near Shadipur Metro Station. Eleven people have been apprehended in connection with the fraud. The central district's Special Staff, Cyber, and Ranjit Nagar police squads worked together to carry out the operation. Police believe that the two syndicates targeted job seekers by obtaining personal information from internet job-search and recruitment sites. The accused then made targeted calls posing as recruiters and offering lucrative job chances. After earning their trust, they requested registration or processing fees ranging from Rs 1,200 to Rs 3,500 on various pretexts. Police said the callers would continue communicating with the victims for several days, assuring them about the proposed job and further formalities. After taking the money, they would eventually stop communicating, they added. The first call center was discovered in the Lal Ratan building. The building was raided, and six

persons were detained: four women and two males. In a separate investigation, a second suspected fraudulent job placement call center was discovered in the same facility. Five males discovered manning the calling cubicles were apprehended. During the inspection, cops allegedly discovered job-seeker information and active calling apps. In the second call center, operators were seen utilizing 'Xlite', an internet-based VoIP program, to make calls to potential job searchers. When pressed to prove the authenticity of their recruitment activity, police said the operators were unable to present company authorization letters, placement agreements, or records of candidates who were actually placed in jobs. Thirteen computer systems, five mobile phones, calling software, job-seeker data, communication logs, and digital and financial evidence were taken from the two locations. The first center apprehended six people, including Arpit, 38, and Ashok, 36, as well as four ladies aged 27 to 29. The five people seized at the

second center have been named as Asim, 32, Sandeep, 29, Gaurav Malik, 34, Gyan Singh, 32, and Rohit, 34. According to police, job-seeker data, including data allegedly sourced from online recruitment platforms such as Shine.com, was used to make targeted calls. A case has been filed at the Ranjit Nagar police station under the applicable sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Police said they are conducting additional investigations to identify the alleged owners and masterminds behind the two operations, trace the source of the job-seeker data, follow the financial trail, and identify other people connected to the suspected fraud network.

The Delhi Police has cautioned job seekers to be wary of calls offering guarantied employment in exchange for registration, processing, or placement payments. Citizens were also reminded to independently verify an employer's credentials before disclosing personal information or making payments.

BJP nominates 8 Rajya Sabha leaders from Uttar Pradesh

New Delhi, Oct 05: The BJP has announced eight candidates for the next Rajya Sabha election in Uttar Pradesh, aiming to balance castes and hinting that at least one seat will be up for election on October 16. Union Minister Hardeep Puri, who was expected to be selected, is not on the list, implying a change at the Center as well. The names of Union Minister of State BL Verma and former Union Minister Smriti Irani, who were supposed to be on the list, are also missing. The candidates named today include minister state minister Dharampal Singh, lawyer Radhakant Ojha, State OBC Morcha president Prakash Pal, former MP Vidyasagar Sonkar, Gopi Krishna Pandey, former MP Priyanka Singh Rawat, state General Secretary Ram Pratap Singh Chauhan and Jharkhand Governor Santosh Gangwar's daughter Shruti Gangwar. Ten seats in the state are up for election on October 16. The BJP is certain to win seven seats, and is pushing for an eighth. The Samajwadi Party, which has already named two candidates, is likely to field a third, sources have indicated. All eight candidates will file their nomination in Lucknow at 11.30 am tomorrow. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and state party chief Pankaj Chaudhary will be present on the occasion. Keeping the upcoming assembly elections in mind, the BJP has struck a balance among the state's important castes and communities. It fielded three OBC candidates, three from the General sector, and two from the Scheduled Castes. The list also includes two Brahmins and a Rajput. Minister Dharampal Singh belongs to the Lodh community. Ramakant Ojha and Gopi Krishna Pandey represent the Brahmins.

Prakash Pal is the president of the party's OBC Morcha in Uttar Pradesh, while Dharmpal Singh Lodh and Shruti Gangwar are also OBCs. Vidyasagar Sonkar and Priyanka Rawat come from the Dalit community. Ram Singh Chauhan comes from the Thakur community. Given their numerical dominance, all eight BJP candidates are expected to win. Similarly, the victory of the two SP candidates, Ramgopal Yadav and Dhanraj Parimal Nathwani, is inevitable. The BJP has also secured regional balance: Dharmpal Singh and Ram Pratap Chauhan are from western Uttar Pradesh and Braj, respectively, while Shruti Gangwar hails from Rohilkhand. Gopi Krishna Pandey and Vidyasagar Sonkar are from Purvanchal, whereas Prakash Pal is from Kanpur-Bundelkhand, and Radhakant Ojha is from Prayagraj.

Kerala BJP Councilor Agrees Not to Step Down Days After Submitting Letter

New Delhi, Oct 05: R Sreelekha, a BJP councilor and former Kerala police chief, has consented to withdraw her resignation after conversations with party leaders, alleviating pressure on the BJP administration in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. S Suresh, the BJP state general secretary, acknowledged that her declaration had put the party on the defensive, but guaranteed that the matter had been rectified. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the state BJP president, is due to meet with her. Suresh told reporters that R Sreelekha had not intended to cause a crisis for the party or destabilize the corporation administration. He attributed her resignation announcement on a WhatsApp group to her current state of mind. "The party was hurt by the res-



ignation announcement," he added, adding that R Sreelekha herself had helped address the problem. R Sreelekha, who represents the Sasthamangalam ward, claimed personal reasons for leaving away. On September 30, she handed in her resignation letter to Mayor VV Rajesh. However, the corporation secretary had not received the letter, rendering the formal process incomplete. Her decision threatened to

erode the BJP's slender numerical advantage.

The party had 50 councilors in the 101-member corporation and was able to clinch control with the assistance of one independent. If her resignation had taken effect, its own strength would have decreased to 49, leaving the combination with 50 members. Her decision of not stepping down offers immediate relief to the BJP, though the administration

would not have fallen automatically due to her resignation. A no-confidence motion against the mayor would require the support of 51 councillors, a majority of the council's sanctioned strength.

The episode has brought her disagreements with the leadership back into light. R Sreelekha has previously expressed unhappiness at being passed up for the mayoral position after being portrayed as the party's face throughout the corporation election campaign. K S Sabarinadhan, a Congress councilor from neighboring Kowdiar, described her resignation announcement as a damage to people's faith. He claimed that citizens in her ward had approached him for help because the BJP leader had not addressed their issues.

VPP chairman criticizes government over child's death connected to inadequate roads



Shillong, Oct 05: VPP president Ardent Miller Basaiwmoit slammed the state administration on Sunday for the death of a three-year-old toddler who purportedly died on his way to a health facility due to inadequate road connection.

The youngster, from Domkyrkoh village in Rambrai constituency, died on October 1 while being transported for medical treatment, according to Basaiwmoit. The VPP president expressed concern at the tragedy, saying it underlined the hardships that people

experience in rural areas due to inadequate road infrastructure. "The government claims to be working for development, but this incident shows that things are not as they should be under the leadership of the NPP government," Basaiwmoit said to reporters.

He stated that the incident was not isolated, and that people in various places continue to have difficulty getting essential services due to inadequate roads.

Basaiwmoit stated that the government should cease defending its development

record and instead prioritize initiatives based on the urgency and demands of the people. "There is no point in trying to justify everything because, ultimately, you cannot hide the reality. We see development taking place, including roads and other infrastructure, but these are the rights of the people.

At times, the government's allocation for roads does not correspond with the actual needs of the people," he said. He emphasized that road construction should be prioritized in locations where people urgently demand connectivity, particularly where access to healthcare is dependent on the state of the road.

"The government must assess which areas require roads first and which can wait. There must be a clear priority where roads are desperately needed; these should be built first, and then other places can follow," Basaiwmoit said.

DMK to file a Rs 1 crore defamation case against TVK over R Veeramani claims

New Delhi, Oct 05: The DMK has obtained permission from the Madras High Court to initiate a Rs 1 crore defamation suit against Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leaders over charges related to granite baron R Veeramani's POCSO case.

Justice K Govindarajan Thilakavadi of the Madras High Court granted permission to the DMK, represented by general secretary Duraimurugan, to file defamation actions against TVK leaders Aadhav Arjuna and CTR Nirmal Kumar, as well as the party's IT section.

The DMK's petition alleges that the TVK leaders and the party's IT wing had accused the DMK of shielding Veeramani in a case registered under the POCSO Act during the party's previous term in government. The proposed suit seeks damages of Rs 1 crore over the allegations. Veeramani, an industrialist associated with Gem Granites,



and two alleged associates have been detained under the stringent Goondas Act. Veeramani was arrested in the POCSO case

in which he has been accused of sexually abusing minor girls. Last week, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay accused Stalin

of collaborating with the AIADMK to provide "protection" to Veeramani during the previous DMK government's control.



What was the arrangement, Tamil Nadu is wondering. Stalin sir, open your mouth; joining hands with you, the AIADMK is also not opening its mouth; if there is a collusion even in this subject, will you not open your mouth by reaching an agreement?" Vijay asked. "Vijay, who has stopped acting in films, nevertheless performs in front of audiences. I saw your dialog delivery during the Madhurantgam shoot. A few questions for you: By purchasing AIADMK MLA Maragatham Kumaravel and running her as a candidate again, having her close to you, how are you able to label DMK 'an evil force' and TVK 'pure force' without embarrassment?" MK Stalin challenged Vijay in response. "You have said BJP and DMK are no different," MK Stalin said. "People know very well who is expunged from assembly records if someone criticizes the BJP in the legislative

assembly." How many times have you opposed the BJP since you founded the party? How many protests have you organized?" You yelled, "Stalin, open your mouth and speak about the Veeramani case." Did you arrive without upgrading your script paper? I have previously discussed it in depth. "It appears you have not watched television or read the newspapers," he said. So far, four complaints have been filed against him, three under the POCSO Act and one for alleged suicide facilitation. The authorities are also looking into dubious financial transactions allegedly conducted by Veeramani. The two associates have been identified as Shanthi and Mahendra Simhan. The trio had previously been detained and held in judicial custody. They are among 14 persons detained under the Goondas Act on orders from Chennai City Police Commissioner A Amalraj.

North East Chronicle



What happens in the space between two decisions

Decisions often receive attention only at the beginning and the end. People discuss the problem, choose a course of action and later examine the result. Yet much of the real work happens in between. That period determines whether an idea becomes a functioning plan. Responsibilities need to move from one person to another. Information must reach the right people. Small obstacles need resolution. Assumptions may need correction. Sometimes the original plan itself requires adjustment. This middle stage can become invisible because it lacks the drama of a major decision. There is no announcement to mark every small step. Yet projects frequently fail not because the initial idea was poor, but because nobody managed the space between intention and execution. A useful system therefore gives attention to follow-through. It identifies who will act, what they need and when the next review should happen. The lesson applies to personal commitments as well. Saying that something will be done is only the beginning. The quiet work afterwards gives the promise substance. Between deciding and achieving lies a stretch of ordinary effort. It may not attract attention, but it is often where outcomes are actually determined.

Trapped leaseholders: Labour must keep its promise to set them free

To the millions of leaseholders across the country, you have my word. The days of you being squeezed for every penny are coming to an end,” Andy Burnham told the Labour party conference. Only a few hours earlier, his housing secretary, Angela Rayner, had announced that the government would legislate for a new independent regulator and launch a consultation to cap “rip off” administrative fees.

While these are undoubtedly steps in the right direction, they are miles away from Labour’s manifesto promise to “finally bring the feudal leasehold system to an end”. In its modern form, leasehold in England and Wales turns homes into income streams for freeholders. It should be abolished. There are powerful vested interests – billionaires, aristocrats and big businesses – that would oppose this move. But the system of service charges is crippling the housing market because its exorbitant cost puts off prospective buyers. The average annual service charge for a flat in England and Wales is now £2,405, up 32.6% since 2020 and 55.6% over a decade. Owners of flats in high-rise blocks in London are paying service charges of more than £7,000 a year. Little wonder that first-time buyers are increasingly bypassing flats.

The current system sees homeowners enter into long-term leases in which they must pay sums annually to freeholders. These can rise quickly to very high levels. The government proposes a £250 annual cap on ground rents for existing residential leases and limits on fees for requests such as keeping a pet. Ministers are consulting over whether residents could pay less to buy out freeholds. But there is no sign of action on annual service charges for maintenance costs determined by distant firms. Last year, 37% of flats across England and Wales had a service charge that exceeded 1% of their value – making them hard to mortgage and sell. Surely homeowners should not have to buy their freedom at an outrageous price while being charged for years by a management system they cannot realistically change? Addressing the Labour party conference, Andy Burnham reassured millions of leaseholders nationwide that their

days of being financially squeezed are coming to an end. Just hours prior, housing secretary Angela Rayner announced plans to introduce legislation for an independent regulator and a consultation to cap exploitative administrative fees. While positive, critics argue these measures fall short of Labour’s manifesto pledge to abolish the feudal leasehold system. In England and Wales, leasehold turns homes into income streams for freeholders. Despite opposition from powerful vested interests, the soaring cost of service charges—now averaging £2,405 annually nationally and exceeding £7,000 in London high-rises—is crippling the housing market and deterring first-time buyers. The government has proposed a £250 annual cap on existing ground rents and limits on minor fees, alongside consultations on freehold purchases. However, decisive action on annual maintenance service charges determined by distant firms remains absent. Last year, 37% of flats carried service charges exceeding 1% of their property value, rendering them difficult to sell or mortgage.

This crisis has erupted into a major political flashpoint in the Holborn and St Pancras byelection, where six out of seven homes sold last year were leasehold. Green leader Zack Polanski, running for parliament, has turned the issue into a test of Labour’s credibility, accusing the party of favoring developers while pairing leasehold abolition with rent controls. Although legislation banning new leasehold properties is expected before the next election, it may not take effect until after ward due to ministerial fears of freeholder litigation—despite the government previously winning similar court battles over Michael Gove’s housing bill.

The core challenge is whether proposed reforms provide owners of the existing five million leasehold homes a credible escape from dependency or merely regulate continued subservience. Ministers must prove how trapped leaseholders can regain control through the right to manage, freehold acquisition, or commonhold conversion. Offering mere complaint mechanisms would break their promise to end a historic injustice.

Next-Gen GST and India’s next phase of growth

India’s ambition to achieve the vision of a Viksit Bharat requires a resilient and inclusive economic ecosystem in which enterprises of every size can flourish, regardless of where they originate. Over the past twelve years, a sustained governmental focus has been directed toward building the structural foundations necessary for such growth. The milestone introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017 fundamentally reshaped the nation’s indirect taxation architecture by establishing a unified national market. Building upon this bedrock, the Next-Gen GST initiative carries the reform agenda forward, drawing directly from nine years of ground-level implementation experience, extensive administrative insights, and the collective feedback of taxpayers and state governments alike.

Conceived under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Next-Gen GST framework was designed around two deeply interconnected objectives: rationalizing and reducing tax rates to ease household burdens, and significantly simplifying compliance procedures for businesses. The revised rate structures officially came into effect on September 22, 2025, providing immediate relief to consumers while injecting fresh momentum

into commercial activity. As the administration prepares to introduce the next phase of comprehensive process reforms before the GST Council, these coordinated measures collectively reinforce a taxpayer-centric vision. They aim to secure household savings, offer businesses greater predictability, and ensure that commercial entities can fulfill their statutory obligations without encountering avoidable procedural bottlenecks. Throughout this transformative journey, the states have remained indispensable partners, actively contributing their unique regional priorities and practical governance experience to the GST Council. Their commitment to shaping consensus decisions and overseeing seamless local implementation underscores the fundamental strength of India’s cooperative federalism. This collective willingness to pursue a shared national objective while respecting individual governmental responsibilities has yielded highly encouraging empirical outcomes. Between October 2025 and July 2026, the aggregate value of reported taxable supplies registered a robust growth of 25.8% compared to the corresponding period a year earlier. This data demonstrates that a lighter, more rationalized tax structure does not compromise public revenues;

rather, it is accompanied by a massive expansion in genuine economic activity, creating a virtuous cycle for both enterprise growth and public finance. The underlying resilience of this economic revival is vividly mirrored in the latest fiscal performance metrics. Gross GST revenue collections reached an impressive Rs 12.46 lakh crore during the April–September 2026 half-year window, marking a healthy 11.6% increase over the previous year.

A closer examination of the monthly trajectory reveals sustained momentum, with every single month from June through September recording strong double-digit annual growth rates. Combined collections for these four consecutive months accelerated by nearly 15%, while net collections—calculated after accounting for legitimate refunds—expanded by 10.4% over the half-year period. This coexistence of meaningful tax relief for citizens and robust revenue growth for developmental expenditure illustrates the soundness of the reform architecture. Beyond macro-level revenue aggregates, the sheer breadth of the economic expansion is equally significant. Reported taxable supplies expanded uniformly across all eleven major sector groups and throughout every major state in the country. In a vast and economically di-

verse nation like India, this widespread participation is critical. Broad-based sectoral and regional growth generates fresh avenues for smaller enterprises to integrate into wider national supply chains, enabling diverse communities to reap the direct benefits of heightened consumer demand, increased private investment, and expanded employment opportunities. Further corroborating this trend, reported sales directly to consumers (B2C transactions) surged by 26.7% in the post-reform comparative analysis. When tax rationalization is effectively passed down to retail prices, households gain vital financial breathing room to address other essential needs or enhance their savings. Consumer welfare and enterprise expansion are inextricably linked: the sustained purchasing power of ordinary families drives the aggregate demand for goods and services supplied by businesses.

This economic ripple effect travels smoothly from the household consumer to local retailers, upstream suppliers, and primary producers. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), operating within a unified national market unlocks practical pathways to customer bases far beyond their immediate geographic boundaries. Businesses located in Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns are increasingly

empowered to cultivate these broader commercial relationships while continuing to invest in local talent and generate regional employment. Conversely, larger enterprises expanding their footprint into smaller urban centers stimulate localized economic clusters, creating valuable prospects for regional suppliers, distributors, and service providers. The common framework of the GST underpins these commercial bridges, while streamlined administrative processes ensure they remain easy to maintain. Participation levels within the national tax framework reflect profound institutional trust and formalization. Total GST registrations spanning both Central and State jurisdictions approached approximately 1.71 crore by the close of August, representing a significant 15% increase compared to the previous year. Compliance discipline has kept pace with formalization; for the April–July 2026 tax periods, the volume of GSTR-3B returns filed on or before their respective due dates rose by 12.6% year-on-year. These positive trends place an explicit, reciprocal responsibility on tax administrations to match taxpayer diligence with highly reliable digital services, crystal-clear regulatory guidance, and rapid grievance redressing mechanisms. The operational mechanics of the Input Tax

Credit (ITC) mechanism represent another vital dimension of the evolving taxpayer experience. Post-reform data indicates that the proportion of total tax liability successfully discharged through utilized credits has risen, while accumulated, uncleared credits have decreased relative to total taxable supplies. This trend is a major positive for enterprises that rely heavily on the unhindered flow of eligible credit to maintain healthy cash flows.

For smaller firms, operating capital dictates how efficiently they can procure raw materials, fulfill pending purchase orders, and scale up operations for future contracts. Equally critical to business liquidity is the prompt processing of tax refunds. During the April–September window alone, approximately Rs 1.80 lakh crore was successfully refunded to commercial taxpayers.

Ensuring the timely return of legitimate dues is a cornerstone of an efficient, transparent taxation system. Enhancing predictability and turnaround times in the refund lifecycle allows enterprises to plan their capital expenditures, material procurement, and production cycles with absolute confidence. Indeed, a taxpayer’s seamless experience in securing eligible refunds serves as a definitive benchmark of modern administrative performance.

Private universities under the scanner

The recent Supreme Court order dated September 17, originating from the case of Ayesha Jain versus Amity University, Noida, has brought all private and deemed-to-be universities across the country under intense judicial scrutiny. While initial proceedings centered on specific student grievances regarding documentation and name-change records, the apex court uncovered deeper, systemic institutional irregularities.

Recognizing that such challenges are not isolated instances but reflective of wider industry trends, the court expanded the scope of the litigation into a comprehensive, nationwide examination in the larger public interest. This landmark judicial intervention serves as an urgent wake-up call for millions of students currently enrolled in private institutions or aspiring to join them, highlighting pervasive concerns over arbitrary administrative practices, steep and unregulated fee hikes, and a general lack of operational transparency within the higher education sector. De-

living a strong stance on the commercialization of education, the division bench comprising Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and NV Anjaria emphatically ruled that private universities are fundamentally educational institutions and cannot be permitted to operate as profit-making commercial entities. To enforce this principle, the Supreme Court mandated that all private and deemed-to-be universities must disclose five years of audited financial records, detailed fee structures, and transparent accounts of fund utilization. Furthermore, the court explicitly barred the diversion of institutional funds for non-educational purposes and directed that comprehensive administrative details regarding student admissions, fee collections, and faculty recruitment be made readily accessible to regulatory bodies.

This rigorous accountability framework reinforces the foundational premise that higher education must prioritize academic excellence and student welfare over commercial accumulation. Sig-

nificantly, this legal awakening also brings to the forefront the legal reality that private universities fall directly under the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. This critical accountability measure traces its roots to a landmark Gauhati High Court ruling, which stemmed from an RTI application filed by Dr. Nani Bath, a professor at Rajiv Gandhi University in Itanagar. Seeking crucial institutional details from the Indira Gandhi Technological and Medical Sciences University, a private establishment located in Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh, that legal battle firmly established that transparency is a non-negotiable obligation for any institution imparting higher education. When private entities enter the educational sphere, they assume public duties, making public scrutiny through mechanisms like the RTI Act an essential safeguard against administrative arbitrariness and financial opacity.

The implications of these regulatory developments are particularly striking when examining the rapid proliferation of private uni-

versities across India, especially in the eight Northeastern states, where at least 66 such institutions currently operate. A closer look at the regional distribution reveals a staggering density of private universities relative to local population demographics. Sikkim, for instance, boasts twenty-six private universities despite having a total population of only about seven lakh residents. Similarly, Arunachal Pradesh accommodates eight private universities for a population of roughly 19 lakh, while Meghalaya hosts seven. Assam leads the absolute count in the region with eleven private institutions, followed by Tripura with five, Nagaland and Manipur with four each, and Mizoram with one. This massive concentration raises profound questions about the regional demand-supply equilibrium and whether the Northeast genuinely requires such an extensive network of private universities, many of which frequently hit media headlines for administrative mismanagement and regulatory non-compliance. While it would

be incorrect and unfair to paint all private and deemed-to-be universities with the same brush—as many maintain rigorous academic standards and deliver quality education—the recurrent controversies surrounding a significant segment of them cannot be ignored. Past incidents, such as the high-profile arrest of a university promoter in Meghalaya, underscore the tangible risks associated with a lack of oversight.

The Supreme Court’s mandate for financial transparency and strict fund-utilization tracking directly addresses these vulnerabilities. By restricting profit-seeking behaviors and compelling institutions to open their books, the judiciary is actively safeguarding the future of students who invest their hard-earned money and formative years into these institutions. Ultimately, this judicial push for accountability must be matched by proactive institutional reform, ensuring that private higher education fulfills its solemn promise of nurturing intellectual growth rather than prioritizing commercial gains.

End the black market in child adoption

The absence of a comprehensive, secular civil legal framework governing child adoption in Bangladesh has created a profound and dangerous legislative vacuum, laying the structural groundwork for a booming, illicit black market in human lives. While the vast majority of sovereign nations maintain structured, transparent statutory mechanisms to regulate the placement and welfare of children, Bangladesh lacks a unified civil statute applicable to all citizens regarding adoption. This critical legal deficiency, when compounded by the deep-seated emotional yearning of childless couples striving to build families, has driven desperate prospective parents away from formal institutions and straight into the waiting hands of unregulated digital forums and opportunistic criminal intermediaries.

A recent, eye-opening investigative report pub-

lished by Prothom Alo exposed the alarming scale of this underground economy, revealing the existence of at least 39 public groups operating openly on Facebook and scrutinizing 288 distinct posts designed to broker illegal infant transfers. However, social media represents merely the digital storefront of a much larger, insidious, and entrenched syndicate operating deep within hospital corridors and local communities across the country. This underground baby trade thrives entirely on systemic exploitation, capitalizing ruthlessly on the intersecting vulnerabilities of destitute, marginalized mothers and the profound grief of infertile couples. Syndicate brokers and criminal agents routinely trawl public and private healthcare facilities, identifying pregnant women facing abandonment by partners, extreme social stigma, or absolute economic destitution, offering them temporary shelter or

financial inducements until childbirth. Once delivered, these infants are commodified and traded like retail goods, with newborn boys commanding prices around Tk 300,000 and newborn girls fetching approximately Tk 200,000. While some participating biological mothers are driven by sheer starvation and the utter inability to feed another mouth, others find themselves entangled in predatory financial scam rings.

Instances of digital deceit are disturbingly common; for example, a vulnerable prospective father from Kushtia recently lost Tk 10,000 to fraudsters who displayed a random infant over a video call, collected advance deposits via mobile financial services, and promptly vanished into thin air along with their network. Despite the sheer cruelty and illegality of these transactions, law enforcement agencies remain distressingly lax in their oversight, heavily hindered by the reality that

neither willing buyers nor compromised sellers ever file formal complaints. Consequently, thousands of vulnerable children slip silently into an opaque underworld with zero regulatory tracking regarding whether they ultimately find safe, loving homes, are forced into domestic servitude, or vanish into far more sinister fates.

Technology corporations and social media giants must also bear substantial culpability for enabling these illicit trading networks to operate with near-total impunity. Meta, the parent corporation that owns Facebook, maintains explicit corporate policies forbidding content that facilitates the commercial sale of children or promotes illegal adoption. Yet, the public groups and illicit posts uncovered by journalistic investigations remain entirely visible, easily searchable, and deeply integrated into the platform’s engagement-driven architectural design. Meta

profits directly from the user attention, data generation, and algorithmic engagement that these illegal trafficking communities consistently attract. Regulatory authorities in Bangladesh must adopt an aggressive and uncompromising stance, legally compelling Meta to immediately purge these public groups, act on investigative reports with promptness, and establish proactive institutional cooperation protocols with national law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, cracking down exclusively on social media pages is far from sufficient; law enforcement must dismantle the physical syndicates operating across hospitals and regional networks, ensuring that criminal actors do not simply migrate their illicit operations into hidden, encrypted messaging applications. To permanently dismantle this predatory black market and protect society’s most defenseless members, the government

of Bangladesh must enact a comprehensive, secular civil legal framework for child adoption that accommodates citizens of all faiths and backgrounds. Such transformative legislation must institute rigorous court oversight, mandate thorough background screenings and psychological assessments for prospective adoptive parents, and establish a secure national registry capable of tracking the safety, welfare, and development of every placed child. Providing childless couples with a lawful, transparent, and humane route to parenthood is essential not only for fulfilling their legitimate family aspirations but, more importantly, for shielding vulnerable children from exploitation. By establishing a safe, highly regulated, and compassionate adoption ecosystem, Bangladesh can protect its citizens while systematically starving the illicit criminal networks that prey upon human desperation.

HDFC Bank advances up 16.3% YoY, deposits rise 18.8% as on Sept 30: provisional data

New Delhi: HDFC Bank’s gross advances grew 16.3% year-on-year to Rs 32.20 lakh crore as of September-end, while deposits rose at a faster pace of 18.8% to Rs 33.28 lakh crore, according to the provisional business figures released on Sunday.

The bank’s period-end advances under management stood at Rs 33.08 lakh crore, up 15.3% on year.

Average advances under management during the September quarter grew 14% year-on-year to Rs 31.87 lakh crore.

Deposit growth continued to outpace advances during the quarter. Average deposits rose 16.8% year-on-year to Rs 31.67 lakh crore from Rs 27.11 lakh crore in the corresponding period last year. Growth was led by time deposits, which

increased 22.8% on year to Rs 22.76 lakh crore as of September 30. CASA deposits grew at a slower 10.8% to Rs 10.52 lakh crore. On an average basis, CASA deposits increased 10.7% to Rs 9.71 lakh crore, while time deposits rose 19.7% to Rs 21.95 lakh crore. The bank also disclosed that it mobilised foreign currency deposits equivalent to \$11.5 billion, under the Reserve

Bank of India’s FCNR(B) swap facility introduced in June. Against these deposits, HDFC Bank’s overseas branches extended loans worth \$5.7 billion. It also issued standby letters of credit to other banks aggregating \$3.1 billion, in respect of loans against the deposits. During June-August, the bank also raised \$2.5 billion, through US dollar-denominated senior unsecured bonds.

Oil exports via Hormuz rebound 80% of pre-war levels but Iran

Mumbai: The Strait of Hormuz is reopening for oil — but the recovery is exposing a sharp divide between Iran and its Gulf rivals. Persian Gulf crude exports have surged back above 14 million barrels per day (mbd), recovering to around 80% of pre-war levels, even as Iranian oil shipments have effectively ground to a halt under the ongoing US naval blockade. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf producers are rebuilding export routes, using pipelines, protected shipping corridors and tanker transfers to keep crude moving to global markets. According

to financial commentary publication The Kobre Letter, Persian Gulf crude oil exports surpassed 14 mbd last week for the first time since the Iran war began on February 28. That represents an increase of more than 210% from the low of around 4.5 mbd recorded in March. The four-week rolling average has also climbed to around 14 mbd, its highest level in six months, the latest export chart. After plunging sharply following the disruption to Hormuz, crude flows have steadily climbed back towards their pre-war range.

Premium grocery’s next hurdle Rs 100 cr to Rs 500 cr

New Delhi: Premium grocery brands are finding it relatively easy to build businesses of up to Rs 100 crore as affluent consumers are spending more on differentiated food products and quick commerce is giving them rapid access to a national market. But scaling from Rs 100 crore to Rs 500 crore is proving to be a much bigger challenge, as brands have to move beyond digital channels and build the distribution and supply-chain muscle required for larger-scale expansion.

“Getting to Rs 100 crore is still easy, but getting from Rs 100 crore to Rs 500 crore is hard,” Adarsh Menon, partner, Fireside Ventures, told FE. As brands scale beyond Rs 100 crore, they need distribution beyond digital commerce, including modern trade and general trade, which requires a different operating model, stronger sales execution, supply-chain discipline, product-price-pack architecture and greater capital intensity, he said. The rapid expansion of quick com-

merce has nevertheless changed the way these brands can build their initial scale. For several new-age brands, the channel accounts for more than half of their sales, giving them access to consumers across cities without having to first build the traditional distribution networks required by FMCG companies. Gulab Group, which sells more than 60 SKUs across oils, flours, rice, millets and pulses, sells one pack every 14 seconds on quick commerce and expects to grow nearly four-fold in the coming years. Quick commerce contributes 76% of its revenue. Patang, a premium food brand offering 14 single-origin products named after their places of origin, has generated around Rs 40 lakh in revenue in its first eight months, with a gross margin of 70%. Quick commerce contributes 61% of its revenue. “Historically, getting a new food brand into national distribution was extraordinarily difficult. Today, a founder can discover a consumer on Instagram, sell through

D2C or marketplaces, get onto quick commerce and potentially reach consumers nationally remarkably quickly,” Menon said. The ability to reach consumers quickly is coinciding with a willingness among younger and affluent households to pay a premium for quality, provenance and ingredients. Premium oils can cost Rs 800-1,500 a litre, against Rs 150-250 for regular variants, while premium wheat flour can cost Rs 160-260 a kg compared with Rs 55-75 for conventional products. “HNIs (high net-worth individuals) and connoisseurs have always looked for exceptional products, but we are also seeing younger consumers becoming much more conscious about what they bring into their homes.

That is where we saw an opportunity for our brand Coração Do Vale,” said Richa Khandelwal, founder and managing director, Leads Brand Connect. The brand’s Portuguese extra virgin olive oil is priced at Rs 4,995 for 500 ml.

Tata Group rift: Govt concerned over public dispute, rules out intervention

Mumbai: The government is keeping a close watch on the escalating internal conflict within the Tata group, expressing growing concern that disputes over governance and leadership are playing out so prominently in public. A senior government functionary noted that while officials hope good sense will prevail to tone down the public animosity, there are no immediate plans for state intervention. For New Delhi, the situation creates a distinct dilemma. While the government has little desire to arbitrate a private corporate dispute, the Tata group is not an ordinary enterprise; its vast investments span key national economic priorities, including aviation, defense, electronics, and semiconductors. Prolonged uncertainty at Bombay House risks broader economic fallout, particularly regarding strategic initiatives aimed at building domestic manufacturing capabilities to rival market leaders in China, Taiwan, and South Korea. To mitigate these concerns, the government recently sought and received explicit assurances from the group that its ambitious \$14 billion semiconductor and electronics investments will move forward as scheduled despite the high-stakes leadership friction.

This current friction reflects a broader, historical pattern of government attention toward the group’s stability. In October of last year, top Tata executives met with Union Home Minister Amit Shah



following serious internal disagreements within Tata Trusts, which holds a controlling 66 percent stake in Tata Sons. At the time, the government advised the leadership to resolve their differences swiftly and restore institutional stability. However, rather than receding, the internal fault lines have significantly expanded. What initially began as localized friction within Tata Trusts has evolved into a full-scale institutional tussle involving both the Trusts and Tata Sons over long-term governance, leadership succession, and the potential restructuring of the holding company itself.

The primary flashpoint in this ongoing dispute centers on a recent Tata Sons board meeting where N. Chandrasekaran was reappointed as chairman. The reappointment went through despite strong objections from Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata, who has since requested access

to the video recordings and official minutes of the September 17 meeting to examine the legal basis and procedural validity of the decision. This has triggered competing legal interpretations regarding Tata Sons’ Articles of Association and the exact voting rights held by Trust-nominated directors.

Simultaneously, serious internal fractures have surfaced within Tata Trusts. A strategic proposal to restructure Tata Sons by merging two of its subsidiaries with the holding company—a move intended to help Tata Sons maintain its unlisted status while satisfying Reserve Bank of India regulatory guidelines—faced immediate pushback. Trustees Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh questioned both the communication process behind the proposal and whether the broader body of trustees was properly consulted prior to its submission.

Compounding these in-

ternal leadership disputes are escalating legal and regulatory complications. The Sir Ratan Tata Trust remains bound by directions from Maharashtra’s charity commissioner that restrain it from holding board meetings, a restriction that previously contributed to the unprecedented adjournment of the Tata Sons annual general meeting on August 18. Regulatory scrutiny is now poised to spread to the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, the single largest shareholder in Tata Sons, after Srinivasan and Singh formally approached the state charity authority requesting a comprehensive investigation into Noel Tata’s actions and alleged governance irregularities within the trust. As legal challenges and internal resistance mount on multiple fronts, the group faces a pivotal moment in balancing institutional governance with its strategic commitments to national economic growth.

GST Council Consideration Allow Telecom Companies to Lower Infrastructure Input Tax Credit on Towers

New Delhi: A proposal before the GST Council may allow input tax credit on telecom towers, resolving a long-standing tax issue for the sector. The Council may also take up a clarification under which towers need not be declared as places of business, according to sources. The issue over credit arises from the treatment of telecom towers as immovable property. A tower is bolted to the ground and had therefore been treated as falling within the description of immovable property, on which credit was not available. The proposed change recognises that, in function, a tower is equipment used to carry the antennae through which telecom services are delivered.

The move could reduce the cost base of digital infrastructure at a time when telecom networks are being ex-



panded. Towers are among the principal fixed assets for telecom operators and infrastructure providers, making the availability of credit significant for network investment. “A clear policy or legislative position in line with this would give the sector much-needed certainty, since tower deployment is among the most capital-intensive spends for operators and infrastructure provid-

ers,” Aditya Bhattacharya, partner, King Stubb & Kasiva, Advocates and Attorneys, said.

The second proposal concerns the registration of tower sites. It may be clarified that a telecom tower need not be declared as a place of business. This would spare an operator with hundreds of thousands of sites from declaring each location and amending its

registration whenever a site is commissioned or decommissioned. The same would apply to independent companies that own and share tower assets. The Council’s agenda may further clarify that the telecom regulator is not part of the Government for tax purposes, as it is a statutory authority rather than a government department. The meeting could also cover faster refunds and protection against a supplier’s default. The latter would be particularly relevant to telecom infrastructure companies, which buy from a large number of small vendors across the country. The Council’s agenda may further clarify that the telecom regulator is not part of the Government for tax purposes, as it is a statutory authority rather than a government department.

ITC shares: Citi raises rating to ‘Buy’ despite headwinds, sees 17% upside

New Delhi: Global investment bank Citi has upgraded its rating on ITC Ltd to ‘Buy’ from ‘Sell’, revising upward its target on the FMCG major to Rs 300 from Rs 270 earlier, implying at 17 per cent potential upside. This is even as it believes near-term ITC earnings are likely to remain under pressure following the sharp increase in cigarette taxation. Citi said the ITC stock’s 34 per cent correction in 2026 now prices in the associated volume and profitability risks. “Since the tax hike, ITC has implemented mitigating actions including calibrated price increases and portfolio interventions across key segments. As per our estimates, 75 per cent of the tax increase has already been passed through price hikes, while new launches across LSFT and Premium-DSFT should help retain consumers

within ITC’s portfolio in the event of downtrading,” Citi said. While near-term cigarette volumes could be under pressure given competition from other branded and illicit products, Citi expects cigarette profitability to improve sequentially through FY27 as pricing



actions flow through. Importantly, it believes the earnings downgrade cycle for ITC is largely over, improving the risk-reward at current valuations.

“Mitigation actions progressing better than initially expected - We estimate that ITC has implemented further price hikes by end-2QFY27, offsetting c.75 per cent of the tax burden. It has also launched new variants across LSFT and Premium-DSFT to retain consumers within its portfolio amid downtrading and limit profitability leakage,” Citi said. The brokerage raised its FY27-29E EPS estimate by 3-11 per cent, and value cigarettes segment at 12 times earnings per share,

driven by faster-than-expected price hikes driving recovery in both revenue and margins. Citi said the profitability reset is largely behind ITC and that price increases and portfolio interventions should support a gradual recovery, with EBIT-to-stick improving sequentially through FY27E and approaching pre-tax-hike levels by FY27-end. “We forecast cigarette EBIT to decline 23 per cent in FY27E before recovering in FY28E as pricing actions gain traction and profitability normalizes. Key monitorables include (a) potential further regulatory actions and (b) competition from other branded players and illicit trade,” it said.

New Delhi: Artificial intelligence is beginning to reshape the talent lifecycle at Salesforce, from how candidates prepare for interviews to what the company looks for when hiring and how existing employees are expected to adapt to the technology, Suzana DelliSanti, EVP, Global Talent Acquisition, Salesforce told FE. Salesforce provides candidates with an AI-powered “candidate coach” during the recruitment process, allowing them to prepare for interviews “By having a candidate coach (we) can help candidates with questions that they don’t want to ask the recruiter or the hiring manager. It can help candidates with simple questions about the interview team that they are meeting with, or help prep for the interview,” DelliSanti said. The shift to AI-led solutions is also changing how Salesforce assesses candidates. The company is looking at AI fluency across levels, including how candidates use AI, as it believes this will influence their ability to redesign their roles. In engineering, candidates are increasingly showcasing what they have built, including through open-source projects, rather than relying solely on traditional resumes. The focus on AI does not end with recruitment. Salesforce has created a dashboard to track AI adoption and AI fluency across its workforce. “From where



we started to where we are today, I think that helped us really change the mindset of adopting AI and leveraging the tools that we have. It was less about the tracking mechanism; it was more about encouraging that adoption for an individual’s own growth, because as you’re using AI, you can also see how the workflows change, how the process changes, and you’re actually part of that change,” DelliSanti added. The company has also made AI learning part of its internal transformation, with employees encouraged to use AI tools and executives themselves re-

quired to build agents as part of their learning. This shift is extending to leadership, with continuous learning no longer a trait associated only with new graduates. Senior executives are increasingly expected to demonstrate adaptability and agility as technology and workplace practices change rapidly. DelliSanti added that Salesforce views AI talent costs largely as a supply-and-demand issue, with highly publicised salaries representing only a small segment of AI roles. The company focuses on identifying required skills and hiring the right people for those roles.

Internet Watch Foundation reports huge rise in AI child sexual abuse material

AI-generated child sexual abuse material is proliferating online, with the amount of illegal material investigated this year already exceeding the total for 2025.

Analysts at the Internet Watch Foundation have found more photorealistic child sexual abuse material in the first half of 2026 than for the whole of the prior year. The UK-based IWF, which monitors abuse material globally, said it had assessed 6,310 AI images that met the legal definition of child sexual abuse, 40% higher than last year’s total of more than 4,500.

Instances of AI-made child sexual abuse material have been rising for several years, with a huge surge in videos in particular, although the latest IWF figures refer to still images only. The majority of the images seen by analysts were of girls, and of children aged seven to 13.

The IWF said the figures underlined the need for new statutory regulation on AI.

Andy Burnham’s government has not signalled that a new bill focused on



the technology is imminent. Kanishka Narayan, the UK’s AI minister, has said “nothing is off the table” in terms of fresh regulation, but that the test for any legislative proposal will be: “Will it make the British people safer?” Hannah Swirsky, the head of policy at the IWF, said she backed calls from parliamentarians

for “binding legislation on AI” to compel companies to build safer models. “It is incumbent on tech companies to build tools which cannot be abused this way,” she said. This problem has been created by technology, and if companies won’t build tools which are safe by design.” AI-generated child sexual abuse material

is illegal in the UK and the government has also made it illegal to adapt an AI model to create abuse material or to distribute such models to others. Developing a model designed to produce hyper-realistic child sexual abuse material carries a criminal sentence of up to five years. A government spokesperson said: “UK

law is clear that child sexual abuse material is illegal, regardless of whether it is AI-generated or not. We are going further by banning AI models that are used to create this type of abuse material and produce sickening, hyper-realistic imagery that often contains the likeness of real children.”

AI has also enabled online predators to create explicit images of children. The Report Remove service, which blocks intimate images from appearing online, has received 420 reports from children concerning images of themselves that they believed had been faked or manipulated to appear explicit. The number has already exceeded its 2025 total of 397.

The use of AI tools to create abuse tools has led to the National Crime Agency and IWF encouraging parents and guardians to keep pictures of their children off social media. The guidance suggests making social media accounts private or sharing pictures of children through a “close friends” group only.

Monday briefing: You asked, we answered – how will the US midterms go?



South Africa: South Africa’s president has called on men to take more responsibility for violence against women as he announced measures to tackle the problem, amid anger at authorities over a recent wave of murders.

Cyril Ramaphosa acknowledged that not enough had been done to protect women. He said police would be reviewing unsolved murders, attempted murders and serious sexual offences against women and children, as well as producing a funded plan to reduce the forensic backlog for such cases, both within 60 days.

In a televised speech on Tuesday night, the president said local governments would have five months to address issues that compromised women’s safety, from broken streetlights to overgrown public spaces and abandoned buildings. He added that he had tasked five ministers to come up with a plan within 60 days to reduce alcohol-fuelled violence. “Alcohol does not cause gender-based violence and it can never excuse it. Responsibility always lies with the perpetrator,” Ramaphosa said. “But harmful alcohol use is a significant aggravating factor in interpersonal violence and it must be addressed as part of our wider prevention effort.

“Women should not have to live in fear because government has failed to repair a light, clear a public space,

process evidence or enforce a law.”

South Africa has been gripped by grief and fury after the discovery of 11 women’s bodies dumped across Ekurhuleni, the municipality adjoining Johannesburg to the east, since 15 July. Eight of the women were found in the last three weeks, including Elizabeth “Tsontso” Moselakgomo, who was discovered on 12 September after she went missing when she went for a run after work.

Ramaphosa said suspects had been arrested in connection with three of the killings and that the other cases would not be left to go cold. He added that police had not found evidence that a serial killer was responsible for all 11 killings, but that all possibilities were still being investigated.

He directly addressed South African men, urging them to challenge relatives, friends and colleagues who harassed, humiliated or abused women. “It is time for good men to stop being silent men,” he said.

“For too long, gender-based violence has been treated as a woman’s problem to solve. Women march, the women of our country organise, they speak out, they protest, they confront and they comfort survivors,” Ramaphosa said.

“Women change their routes home. Avoid going out at night and warn one another about dangerous places and dangerous men. We have placed the burden

of male violence on women. That must change.”

Activists expressed their frustration that solid policy actions had not been taken years ago and scepticism that the measures Ramaphosa had announced would work. Shenilla Mohamed, the executive director of Amnesty International South Africa, said: “These are not new issues and as a country we have been talking about ways to tackle the high numbers of [gender-based violence and femicide], especially since 2019 when women took to the streets to protest, and yet here we are again in the face of continued attacks against women. “Amnesty International South Africa also notes the timelines put in place by the president, but this will only mean something if it results in action, and if there are consequences for inaction.”

Mpiwa Mangwiro-Tsanga and Bafana Khumalo, of Sonke Gender Justice, an NGO, said: “Our concern ... is that the response remains heavily weighted towards what happens after violence has already occurred.”

They added: “Investigating unresolved cases, processing forensic evidence and repairing unsafe public spaces are necessary, but they do not constitute a comprehensive prevention strategy. It is concerning that the president is asking municipalities to do what is actually their mandate and yet they do not deliver on these.”

Christa Pike’s lawyer says failed lethal injection leaves her in critical condition

America: Tennessee’s governor on Thursday said it was “deeply disturbing” that his state botched the execution of a death row prisoner who remained alive and snoring 40 minutes after receiving a double dose of the lethal drug that should have quickly killed her.

Bill Lee, a Republican, has suspended all executions in the state until at least the end of the year and ordered an independent inquiry after Wednesday night’s failed attempt to put to death Christa Pike, who was convicted of murder, at the execution chamber in Nashville.

Meanwhile, Pike, 50, remained in the hospital on Thursday afternoon. “We don’t have a sense of her prognosis or much update on her health at the moment, but we do know that she is alive right now and receiving life-saving medical care,” Randy Spivey, one of her attorneys, said at an afternoon press conference.

“She is in critical condition receiving life-saving care. That is the extent of what we have at the moment.”

Spivey, of the office of the post-conviction defender, condemned Tennessee authorities for the manner in which the failed attempt

unfolded. He said officials used seven needles, one of which became bent as it was removed from Pike’s arm.

“Last night was not just inefficient, it was cruel and it was torturous. It was also predictable,” he said, adding that he saw no life-saving care given after the execution attempt was abandoned at about 8.25pm.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday morning, Lee said he had spoken with Frank Strada, secretary of the Tennessee department of correction, but did not have an update on the condition of Pike, who was taken to an off-site medical facility after surviving two doses of pentobarbital.

“This is a tragedy,” Lee said, adding that he had not yet spoken to the families of Pike or the teenager she killed in 1995. “There is no one that wanted what happened last night to happen. It shouldn’t have happened.

“It’s the most difficult of circumstances as it relates to the sentence that should have been carried out by the state. It’s a tragedy, and it’s deeply disturbing that that has happened in this state. The people deserve better than that.”

Lee added, in comments reported by the Tennessean, that he had not yet chosen

an investigator to lead a “comprehensive, third party review” he announced in a statement late Wednesday.

“There are a lot of questions,” he said. “The people of our state deserve to have those questions answered. I’m highly disappointed, along with Tennesseans, about what happened.”

Cameron Sexton, the Republican speaker of Tennessee’s house of representatives, said on Thursday in a social media post that he and other lawmakers would also be investigating what went wrong with the attempted execution. He added that they would look at other ways to prevent executions from failing.

“We will look at all options – expanding the alternatives, and changing the current medications to include potassium chloride,” he said. “Thirty years is too long for justice.”

Robin Maher, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, said her group was aware of seven other people that have survived medical problems due to an execution team’s failure to access a vein to administer lethal injection drugs, but nobody had remained alive after receiving the drugs used in such executions.

‘We swept a lot under the carpet’: Vichy regime film hits home in France of 2026

France: It is the story of how a lowly state administrator unthinkingly becomes a cog in the machine of an authoritarian regime, embracing the bureaucracy and logistics of sending people to their deaths – and it is drawing in audiences to French cinemas.

The French film Notre Salut (Our Salvation), with its modern lighting, improvised scenes and anachronistic 1980s Europop soundtrack, is far from the standard historical costume drama about the second world war.

But the award-winning film about the daily lives of ordinary people participating in the puppet Vichy regime that collaborated with the Nazis – and ensured the deportation of a quarter of France’s Jewish population to concentration camps – is poised to become a box office hit.

The film, which has been given the English-language title A Man of His Time, had a strong cinema opening in France this week, particularly among young audiences, at a time when the country is soul-searching ahead of

next spring’s presidential election.

Marine Le Pen of the far-right, anti-immigration National Rally (RN) continues to top the polls for the presidential race despite the political fallout from an investigation by Mediapart alleging that her party leader, Jordan Bardella, published antisemitic comments as a young party member, which he denies.

Notre Salut comes amid a boom in films about France during the second world war, including more than 5m ticket sales for the two-part biopic of Charles de Gaulle, as well as the controversial Les Rayons et les Ombres about the press baron and Nazi collaborator Jean Luchaire, and the forthcoming Moulin, about the last days of the French resistance leader Jean Moulin.

But rather than tackling well-known heroes or monsters, Notre Salut focuses instead on the role of ordinary people in the Vichy regime that, under Marshal Philippe Pétain, collaborated in the deportation of 76,000 Jewish people to Nazi concentration camps.

The film was inspired by a stash of family letters found by its writer and director, Emmanuel Marre, that gave insight into the life of his great-grandfather Henri Marre, who worked as an administrator under the authoritarian puppet regime.

“There are great figures who make history, but history is also made by the second-players, the grassroots who act on the ground, and that is what is interesting about this film,” said Marc Olivier Baruch, a historian and specialist on state administrators in the Vichy regime.

For Baruch, the most chilling scene in the film is the bureaucratic nitpicking about the costs incurred by providing Jews on cattle trucks with straw and chamber pots. The central character in the film, the administrator Henri Marre, “never chooses to reflect on things or look at what he’s doing, to wonder what his room for manoeuvre is”.

Baruch said the film’s sense of unease was a pull for modern of audiences because today France was “in a time of great uncertainty

... There’s a strong lack of confidence among French people in their elites and in their state and that has been going on for a long time.”

He said the Vichy regime had resonance today as a period in history. “The Pétain dictatorship is the only moment when the far right was in power since 1820. There were these four years at the heart of the 20th century when the far right was in power and clearly for French people in 2026 and 2027 that is interesting ... There has been a certain unease in modern France that it would be better to stop talking about Vichy, to draw a line under it, stop the masochism [of looking back]. That of course is stupid, and not possible.”

Film critics suggested modern audiences were seeking to better understand the rise of the far right across Europe and in France.

Henry Rousso, a historian who has studied the place of the Vichy regime in collective memory, wrote of the film in Le Monde: “The RN is not the fascism of the 1930s, nor a resurgence

of the Pétain regime, but knowing this history allows an understanding of what [the RN] is the heir to, and how the mechanisms of gradually renouncing democratic and republican values led to disaster.”

Emmanuel Marre, the film’s writer-director, who won the best Screenplay prize at the Cannes film festival, began working on the story more than a decade ago after the discovery of the letters from his great-grandfather that his family had kept in a drawer.

He told France Inter radio: “There are [similar] drawers everywhere in France ... there is a phantom memory of the collaboration. With this film, we wanted to prise open those drawers and allow all families to look at that – not as flagellation, [but] because after the war France pushed a lot of it under the carpet to survive.”

He said it was crucial to look at the nuance of what led people to collaborate or take a stand. “In between resistance and in collaboration, there is a whole range of human emotions, even the most ambiguous.”

Bangkok at breaking point as floods turn streets into stagnant lakes

Bangkok: Bangkok is used to absorbing the sudden afternoon downpours that inundate the city during the rainy season. Even streets in many central high-rise districts can briefly turn into rivers, with rats and cockroaches racing out of sewers and taking temporary refuge on trees and buildings as the subterranean world is flushed out. But every city has a breaking point, and this year rain fell so fast and so hard that whole neighbourhoods of the Thai capital have been transformed, not into rivers, but stagnant lakes. In parts of the city, roughly 300mm of rain – the equivalent of half a year of average rainfall in London – fell in about two days.

About 40 people died in flood-related incidents, according to the government.

A number of the deaths were from drowning and several from accidental electrocution. Thousands of people stayed in more than 230 shelters across the city, authorities said.

Suleemas Kurangkul, a 73-year-old resident of a block of flats whose ground floor stairs are still under water, said last weekend’s rain was not the usual evening storm but was constant, “like all day, all night”.

“The water just kept rising,” said Suleemas, whose flat is above the waterline on the second floor. By the time she and her neighbours received a mobile phone warning, it was too late, and the street-level water was waist-high. The 1970s Khlong Chan flat compound in north-east Bangkok where Suleemas lives has become a

symbol of the disaster. Photos have been shared across Thailand of the flats rising out of the brownish water, with the rooftops of parked cars barely peeking above the surface, although the authorities had managed to drain away the worst of it by Thursday. Later in the week, during a brief respite in the rain, Suleemas said the water had receded somewhat. “People are so happy to see the sunshine,” she said. “Yet, the smell is getting stronger. So much debris and rubbish floating all over the place.”

Built on a vast floodplain of the Chao Phraya River, Bangkok, a megacity of millions, relies on a network of muddy canals to drain water, as well as pumps and dikes. But concrete construction has destroyed much of the canal network, and the city

is unable to cope.

The government has declared a flood disaster across all 50 of the city’s districts. Some neighbourhoods have turned into dystopian scenes, with people using blow-up paddling pools or, in one case, a floating fridge, as boats to reach their homes. One man was arrested for riding a jetski along a main road. “It’s a lesson,” said Chaleraat Chamrasporn, 55, a resident. “The kids are into doomsday-themed content, so now they can see what the ‘end of the world’ is actually like, or rather, that this is just the beginning.”

Flooding has also disrupted Bangkok’s main Suvarnabhumi airport, with about half of Thai Airways’ workforce unable to report for work at one point this week, causing thousands of items

of luggage to pile up and forcing flight cancellations. Many schools have closed, and with much of the capital in gridlock even people in less affected areas have been stuck at home.

Thailand’s prime minister, Anutin Charnvirakul, told reporters that Bangkok’s metropolitan area was still at risk from flood waters flowing in from the north, and said a war room had been set up to monitor the situation. Thailand’s weather agency has forecast more heavy rain for next week.

It is part of a pattern that seems to be setting in this part of the world. Southeast Asia has already seen a worsening of extreme floods, scientists say, a trend that is set to worsen as fossil fuel pollutants bake the planet further.

The Essence of Garba Elegance Commences With Your Hands: 7 Adhesive Nail Designs for Navratri Celebration



Elevating the traditional Navratri Garba evening ensemble transcends the standard appreciation of a classic chaniya choli, transforming into a comprehensive curation where every individual detail is meticulously amplified for the festive spotlight. This vibrant celebration of culture and movement invites a harmonious layering of oxidized silver jhumkas, intricate heavy chokers, and ghungroo-laden cuffs that chime rhythmically with every energetic twirl. Complementing these tactile metallic elements are garments bursting with rich bandhani prints, resham embroidery, and countless glistening mirror embellishments that catch and refract the dazzling ambient lights of the pandal. Naturally, this high-energy aesthetic extends seamlessly to vibrant cosmetic applications, featuring dramatic kohl-rimmed eyes, glowing highlighters, and bold, festive lip shades designed to withstand hours of vigorous dancing. Yet, completing this ultimate festive metamorphosis this season is the growing prominence of intricate nail artistry, where thematic min-

iature motifs, mirror accents, and brilliant hues of gold, crimson, and turquoise weave the final stroke of elegance into a truly unforgettable Garba look.

For those who find spending hours seated at a salon chair an exhausting and impractical prelude to the festive season, premium press-on nails have emerged as an absolute game-changer, offering a brilliantly convenient, time-saving, and versatile alternative for comprehensive Navratri preparation. Instead of being locked into a single permanent gel or acrylic manicure that might clash with your changing outfits or wear down prematurely from the rigorous, high-energy friction of traditional dandiya and garba dancing, press-ons provide the ultimate freedom to effortlessly switch up your entire fingertip aesthetic from one vibrant night to the next. Whether you want bold, mirror-encrusted gold statements for the grand opening night, rich maroon and traditional motifs for a classic ethnic look, or playful neon hues for a modern fusion vibe, these reusable artificial sets allow you to curate your look instantly

- at home. This seamless flexibility ensures your festive style remains pristine, dynamic, and fully customized throughout the nine-day celebration without ever demanding a tedious, time-consuming salon appointment.
1. Want Actual Navratri Colours On Your Fingertips?Pep Nails Navratri Colours Fake Nails Press On Nails: This set is made specifically around Navratri-inspired colours, making it an obvious choice if you want your manicure to complement your festive wardrobe without overthinking the colour palette.
 2. Love A Soft, Festive Floral Look?24 Pcs Blue And White Floral Press-On Nails: The blue-and-white floral design offers a softer take on Garba glamour, working especially well with white, blue or pastel chaniya cholis when you want your nails to stand out without competing with heavy mirror work.
 3. Going For A Bold Red Garba Look?Mayklen Wine Red Stick-On Nails: A deep wine-red manicure instantly adds drama to a festive outfit and works particularly well with red, maroon, black or gold-toned traditional wear.
 4. Want Something Sparkly And Playful?Secret Lives Pink Silver 3D Bow Cat Eye Press-On Nails: The combination of pink, silver, cat-eye shine and 3D detailing makes this a fun choice for a more glamorous Garba-night outfit, especially if your chaniya choli already has metallic embellishments.
 5. Can't Pick Just One Navratri Colour?NAILWIND 9 Color Multicoloured Press-On Nails: A multicoloured set is practically made for Navratri because it can work with several different outfits across the festival instead of locking you into one shade.
 6. Prefer Bright, Colourful Nails: Navratri, particularly if you're wearing a colourful chaniya choli

and want your manicure to join the party.

7. Want A Colourful, Playful Nail-Art Moment: The NailKnack Premium Rainbow Press-On Nails feature a bright multicoloured design that works beautifully with the maximalist spirit of Garba, especially if you're wearing a colourful chaniya choli or mirror-work outfit. The enduring appeal of festive press-on nails lies in their remarkable versatility, proving that a holiday manicure does not necessarily have to adhere to traditional Indian motifs or literal color-matching to look striking, sophisticated, and completely harmonious with ethnic fashion. Instead of relying on predictable patterns, opting for a vibrant pop of a modern, unexpected color, a sleek reflective metallic finish, or a subtle cluster of tiny, gleaming embellishments can brilliantly echo and pick up the nuanced metallic threads, zari work, or stone details of your outfit without tipping the overall styling into feeling overly contrived, matchy-matchy, or costume-like. This effortless curation allows fashion enthusiasts to experiment with chic, contemporary contrasts—such as pairing an antique gold metallic nail with a rich jewel-toned velvet lehenga or a minimalist chrome finish with a heavily embroidered anarkali—bridging the gap between modern minimalism and rich cultural grandeur. By introducing these understated yet captivating accent details at your fingertips, you elevate your entire festive look with an air of effortless sophistication, ensuring your ensemble feels cohesive, thoughtfully curated, and radiantly chic from the first day of celebrations all the way through the final twilight gathering.

And with Navratri's nine nights giving fashion lovers plenty of opportunities to experiment, press-ons make it easier to change the manicure along with the outfit.

What is the number of calories expended while performing household tasks

Engaging in routine, everyday household chores is far more than just a mundane way to maintain a tidy living space; it is a surprisingly effective form of low-intensity physical activity that actively consumes metabolic energy and noticeably elevates your overall metabolic rate. When your metabolic rate is heightened through physical movement, your body becomes significantly more efficient at utilizing and burning dietary calories, thereby creating a sustainable foundation for long-term weight management and physical wellness without the necessity of a grueling gym session. According to health resources like WebMD, simply operating a vacuum cleaner across your floors for a focused thirty-minute interval can actively expend approximately ninety-nine calories, transforming a standard cleaning chore into a mini calorie-burning workout. Even more impressive is hand-operated floor mopping, which proves to be considerably more efficient because the sweeping, scrubbing, and bending motions engage and activate a multitude of muscle groups simultaneously—spanning your arms, core, and lower body—thereby substantially amplifying your total caloric expenditure while keeping your home spotless.

Washing your automobile by hand—meticulously soaping down the exterior body, scrubbing stubborn grime off the tires, and polishing the windows until they gleam—serves a dual purpose that extends far beyond merely enhancing your vehicle's aesthetic appeal, transforming a routine weekend chore into a surprisingly vigorous physical workout. According to fitness estimates, dedicating a focused thirty-minute window to this hands-on task can actively expend anywhere between one hundred thirty-five and two hundred calories, depending on the intensity of your scrubbing and the thoroughness of your detailing. This substantial caloric expenditure is driven by the continuous engagement of your upper body, core, and stabilizing muscles as you reach overhead to wash the roof, bend down to scour the wheels, and exert physical force to remove bonded dirt and dried bugs. Consequently, spending half an hour transforming your car from dusty to dazzling doubles as an efficient, low-impact exercise session that boosts your daily physical activity levels and seamlessly integrates fitness into your household maintenance routine.

Beyond merely supporting calorie expendi-

ture and metabolic health, routine domestic chores offer the fantastic hidden benefit of actively toning your muscles and enhancing your overall physical flexibility through varied, functional movements. For instance, something as seemingly mundane as making the bed and changing your heavy winter or summer sheets each morning may feel like a simple, mindless routine, but the stretching, tucking, lifting of heavy mattresses, and arranging of pillows actually activates a surprising number of upper body and core muscles while expending an impressive 180 to 300 calories depending on the vigor of your efforts. Similarly, transitioning from household maintenance to active childcare by spending just 30 minutes playing with your children—whether you are lifting and carrying them across the room, chasing them in an energetic game of tag, or rolling around on the floor—transforms quality family time into a delightful yet robust workout that burns between 120 and 180 calories, proving that maintaining a clean home and an active family life can seamlessly double as an effective, functional fitness routine.

Embracing these daily physical responsibilities provides a fun, heartwarming, and entirely organic way to stay active, effortlessly bridging the gap between maintaining a well-kept living space and nurturing your personal health and wellness. Stepping outside to engage in gardening and outdoor tasks—such as tending to vibrant flowerbeds, pushing a lawnmower across the yard, raking up fallen autumn leaves, or hauling heavy watering cans—serves as an exceptional form of low-impact cardiovascular and strength exercise that can easily burn between 120 and 178 calories in just half an hour of focused labor. Meanwhile, transitioning indoors to tackle kitchen cleaning after a large family meal, whether you are vigorously clearing countertops, wiping down greasy surfaces, or spending thirty minutes hand-washing dishes and scrubbing pots, can incinerate up to an astonishing 300 calories while keeping your culinary space impeccably sanitized. For animal lovers, fulfilling pet care duties by taking your dog on a brisk 6-kilometer walk turns a daily responsibility into an invigorating cardio session that helps you shed 150 to 200 calories while strengthening the bond with your furry companion.

Electrolyte Cream: An Emerging Skincare Solution for Dry and Sensitive Skin Types

While electrolyte drinks have long been established as the gold standard for replenishing essential bodily fluids and mineral salts during states of dehydration, this biochemical concept has recently crossed over into the realm of advanced dermatological science, with electrolyte-infused creams and moisturizers rapidly capturing the attention of beauty enthusiasts worldwide. Formulated specifically to target dry, sensitive, and compromised skin barriers, these innovative skincare products work on the principle that the skin's epidermal cells require a precise balance of vital minerals—such as magnesium, potassium, calcium, and sodium—to optimize cellular function, maintain moisture retention, and facilitate efficient communication between cellular layers. When environmental stressors, harsh active ingredients, or chronic dryness disrupt the skin's natural lipid barrier and deplete its ionic balance, standard hydrating lotions often fall short, whereas electrolyte creams act as a topical sports drink for the skin, driving moisture deeper and accelerating the natural repair process. Before investing in one of these formulations, consumers should meticulously examine the ingredient list to ensure it features a synergistic blend of skin-identical minerals alongside proven barrier-repair powerhouses like ceramides, hyaluronic acid, and niacinamide, while remaining completely free of pore-clogging silicones, artificial fragrances, and irritating alcohols that could counteract the soothing, restorative benefits required by delicate complexions.

What is electrolyte cream?

While electrolytes like sodium, potassium, magnesium, and calcium are universally celebrated for regulating internal fluid balance, nerve signaling, and muscle contraction throughout the human body, their recent integration into topical skincare formulations—specifically as electrolyte-infused moisturizers—has introduced a sophisticated mechanism for enhancing skin hydration and bolstering overall epi-



dermal health. These specialized creams typically combine these essential ionic minerals with complementary hydrating humectants and barrier-supporting agents to counteract the everyday environmental and chemical aggressors that constantly threaten our skin's integrity. Factors such as intense, prolonged sun exposure, harsh arid weather conditions, stripping cleansers, and the careless overuse of aggressive active ingredients can easily compromise the delicate skin moisture barrier, leaving complexions uncomfortably dry, tight, inflamed, and prone to irritation. Consequently, electrolyte-based skincare products are expertly engineered to restore this lost ionic equilibrium, supercharging moisture retention and reinforcing the skin's natural defense mechanisms against daily stress. Nevertheless, while these innovative formulations offer exceptional support for parched and stressed complexions, consumers must recognize that they function strictly as cosmetic hydrators and barrier protectors, meaning they should never be viewed as a substitute for professional medical treatment or prescription therapies prescribed for chronic skin diseases such as severe acne, eczema, or rosacea. What does electrolyte cream contain?

The exact formulation varies from one product to another. Common ingredients may include: Integrating essential minerals such as sodium, potassium, magnesium, and calcium into modern topical skincare formulations marks a fascinating paradigm shift, harnessing the physiological power of electrolytes to actively support and optimize the skin's internal hydration environment at a cellular level. Just as these vital ionic compounds govern critical fluid balances and electrical impulses throughout the human body, their presence in advanced moisturizers helps to regulate moisture distribution, enhance the skin's natural osmotic pressure, and facilitate smoother communication between epidermal layers that have been stressed by environmental aggressors. When topically applied, these minerals work synergistically with humectants and lipid-replenishing agents to create a deeply nurturing microclimate on the skin's surface, ensuring that water molecules are not only drawn efficiently into the skin but also securely locked in to prevent transepidermal water loss. This targeted ionic support is particularly transformative for dry, fatigued, or compromised complexions, as it helps restore the skin's natural

electrochemical gradient, revives dull textures, and reinforces the structural integrity of the lipid barrier. Consequently, electrolyte-infused skincare transforms basic daily moisturization into a sophisticated, science-backed therapy that empowers the skin to maintain optimal hydration, resilience, and vitality even when exposed to harsh daily stressors, fluctuating weather conditions, and modern urban pollution. Hyaluronic acid has rightfully earned its stellar reputation as one of the most powerful and celebrated humectants in the modern skincare universe, functioning as a moisture-magnet capable of drawing up to one thousand times its molecular weight in water directly from the surrounding atmosphere into the deeper layers of the epidermis. This naturally occurring glycosaminoglycan acts as a vital scaffolding protein within the skin matrix, ensuring that delicate tissues remain optimally cushioned, flexible, and resilient against daily environmental stressors. When applied topically through advanced serums, essences, or rich moisturizers, hyaluronic acid creates a dynamic reservoir of hydration that continuously quenches parched cells, instantly smooths out rough textures, and visibly plumps up fine lines

caused by dehydration. Furthermore, its lightweight yet deeply penetrating nature makes it exceptionally versatile, harmonizing effortlessly with other active ingredients and barrier-repairing agents without ever feeling heavy, greasy, or burdensome on the skin. By restoring and locking in essential moisture levels, this powerhouse molecule transforms dull, tired complexions into dewy, radiant canvases of health, reinforcing the skin's natural barrier and providing long-lasting, touchable softness that endures throughout the day regardless of fluctuating weather conditions or indoor climate control. Ceramides represent an indispensable class of naturally occurring lipid molecules that make up over half of the skin's composition in the intercellular matrix, acting as the fundamental mortar between epidermal skin cells to construct an unbreakable, protective brick wall that shields the complexion from external irritants. When applied topically through advanced moisturizers, these biocompatible lipids actively reinforce and repair a compromised skin barrier, dramatically minimizing transepidermal water loss and locking essential moisture deeply within the tissues to keep the complexion supple, resilient, and fully protected. This barrier-strengthening capability is exceptionally beneficial for individuals battling chronic dryness, environmental sensitivity, or compromised skin conditions, as ceramides actively calm inflammation, soothe irritation, and restore the skin's natural defense mechanisms against harsh weather, pollution, and aggressive cosmetic products. By replenishing these vital lipid stores that deplete over time due to aging and environmental stress, ceramide-infused formulas restore optimal structural integrity to the skin, transforming rough, flaky, and reactive complexions into smooth, balanced, and deeply nourished canvases that maintain long-lasting comfort and healthy radiance throughout the day.

Peptides have emerged as one of the most sophisticated and scientifically celebrated ingredients in modern dermatology, functioning as short chains of amino acids that serve as vital biochemical messengers capable of signaling skin cells to perform specific restorative tasks, such as stimulating fresh collagen production, enhancing elasticity, and accelerating cellular repair. Because these specialized molecules act like tiny keys unlocking specific biological pathways, their ultimate efficacy and visible benefits depend heavily on the precise type of peptide utilized—whether signal, carrier, or neurotransmitter-inhibiting—as well as the overall formulation stability and delivery system of the skincare product in which they are embedded. When expertly combined with complementary hydrators, antioxidants, and barrier-supporting agents, high-quality peptide-infused treatments work synergistically to reinforce the skin's structural matrix, visibly firming sagging contours, smoothing out stubborn expression lines, and restoring a youthful, resilient bounce to aging or stressed complexions. Furthermore, because different peptides target distinct skin concerns, ranging from chronic inflammation to sluggish cellular turnover, formulators can customize these compounds to address multiple signs of premature aging without triggering the irritation or sensitivity often associated with harsher active ingredients like retinoids. This remarkable versatility and gentle yet deeply effective mechanism make peptides an invaluable cornerstone in advanced daily regimens, empowering the skin to continuously renew its structural integrity, maintain optimal barrier function, and sustain a smooth, luminous, and visibly healthy appearance over the long term.

Can electrolyte cream protect the skin from the sun?

An electrolyte moisturiser should not be confused with sunscreen. While some ingredients may support the skin

barrier, they do not provide adequate protection from ultraviolet radiation unless the product is specifically formulated and labelled as a sunscreen with an appropriate SPF. For daytime use, sunscreen remains essential, particularly when spending time outdoors. What should you check before buying?

Don't choose a product simply because the word electrolyte appears on the label. Read the ingredient list and consider what your skin actually needs. For dry or sensitive skin, ingredients such as ceramides, glycerin and hyaluronic acid can be useful moisturising ingredients. People with oily or acne-prone skin may prefer lightweight, gel-based or non-comedogenic moisturisers. It is also wise to be cautious with products containing high amounts of alcohol or added fragrance if your skin is sensitive or easily irritated. Rather than assuming that every product labelled paraben-free or chemical-free is safer, focus on the complete ingredient list and how your skin responds.

One cream does not suit everyone

Electrolyte creams can serve as a valuable and deeply hydrating addition to your daily moisturizing regimen, particularly when your skin barrier has been weakened, stripped, or dehydrated by harsh weather, over-exfoliation, or environmental stress. By infusing the skin with essential ionic minerals, these formulations help restore optimal moisture balance, soothe tightness, and reinforce the skin's natural protective lipid matrix. However, it is vital to recognize that while these advanced cosmetic products excel at supporting surface hydration and barrier recovery, they are not formulated to act as therapeutic treatments. Persistent medical concerns such as chronic acne, stubborn rashes, extreme, unyielding dryness, or deep-seated pigmentation require professional dermatological evaluation and targeted clinical care rather than relying solely on over-the-counter moisturizers.

Mandaadi OTT Release Soori's 150-Crore Hit Ar rives on Netflix

New Deihl: Here's a clean, substantially rephrased version: Actor Soori's latest film, Mandaadi, is set to make its digital debut on Netflix this week following an impressive theatrical performance. Directed by Mathimaran Pugazhendhi, the Tamil-language film has emerged as the biggest commercial success of Soori's career as a lead actor, delivering strong numbers at the box office since the notable Tamil releases of the year, while the upcoming Netflix premiere is expected to expand its reach beyond theatres. With its October 8 streaming date confirmed, Mandaadi will now be available to Netflix subscribers following its successful theatrical journey.

The film's transition to the OTT platform comes after it achieved major commercial milestones both in Tamil Nadu and across international markets, audiences another opportunity to watch the film after its successful theatrical run.

The movie has performed particularly well in Tamil Nadu, where it has crossed the ₹100-crore mark. Its worldwide collection has also reportedly gone beyond ₹150 crore. The film's strong box-office performance has marked a significant mile.

Atlee Reveals His Oscar Dream for Allu Arjun's Raaka



New Deihl: Filmmaker Atlee has revealed that winning an Oscar has become one of his biggest personal ambitions. Speaking at the success meet of Vijay Sethupathi-starrer Batha in Chennai on Monday, Atlee, who co-produced the film, opened up about his aspirations and said he wants to work towards achieving the prestigious international honour. During the interaction, Atlee was asked whether his upcoming directorial Raaka, which stars Allu Arjun, could potentially earn an Oscar. Responding to the question, the filmmaker said the idea of winning the Academy Award has become a personal dream for him, and he intends to put in every possible effort to make it happen. Atlee recalled how the belief that winning an Oscar represents the ultimate achievement in cinema has become deeply rooted among audiences. He said that somewhere along the way, the idea that receiving the coveted award means having truly achieved something in life became part of the public imag-

ination. That thought, he admitted, has stayed with him and motivated his own aspirations. Rather than making a definite prediction about Raaka receiving an Oscar, Atlee spoke about his ambition and determination to aim for that level of recognition. He said he wants to see whether he can accomplish the feat and described it as a "small dream" that he is working hard to fulfil.

The filmmaker also credited audience support as an important part of his journey. He said that if people continue to support him and his work, he hopes to eventually reach the stage where he can realise his Oscar ambition. His comments reflected both his confidence and the scale of his aspirations for his upcoming project.

Atlee further added that if he does eventually find himself standing on the Oscar stage, he has already imagined how he would address the occasion. He said he would speak in Tamil while accepting the honour, highlighting his desire to represent his language and

cultural roots on one of the world's biggest film stages.

His comments have generated interest because Raaka marks his collaboration with Allu Arjun, bringing together two prominent names from the Indian film industry.

While details about the project remain closely watched, Atlee's Oscar ambition has added another layer of anticipation around the film. The director has previously worked across the Tamil and Hindi film industries and has built a reputation for large-scale commercial entertainers. His ambition to take his work to an international platform reflects the growing reach of Indian cinema and the increasing aspirations of filmmakers to gain recognition beyond domestic audiences. Atlee's remarks, however, were framed as a personal goal rather than a confirmed expectation for Raaka.

Whether the film eventually enters the Oscar race or not will depend on several factors, but the director has made it clear that he intends to approach the project with international recognition in mind. For now, Raaka remains one of Atlee's most anticipated upcoming projects, particularly because of Allu Arjun's involvement. The filmmaker's latest comments suggest that he is not only thinking about the film's domestic impact but also dreaming of taking it to a global stage. Atlee ended his remarks on an aspirational note, saying that he is giving his all to achieve his Oscar dream and seeking the audience's support along the way. If that dream eventually becomes reality, he wants his moment on the international stage to also celebrate his Tamil identity.

The Social Reckoning Director Promises Unfiltered Mark Zuckerberg Portrayal

New Deihl: Mark Zuckerberg is set to return as a central figure on the big screen, but the version portrayed in The Social Reckoning is expected to be very different from the young Harvard student played by Jesse Eisenberg in The Social Network 16 years ago.

The new film takes a much darker look at Facebook and the consequences of decisions made at the top of the social media giant. Director Aaron Sorkin, who is behind the new film, has revealed that The Social Reckoning explores the growing concerns surrounding social media and its impact on society. Rather than focusing primarily on Facebook's origins and the creation of the platform, the film turns its attention to the controversies that emerged as the company grew into one of the most influential forces in the digital world.

At the centre of the story is Zuckerberg and the decisions associated with the development and operation of Facebook. According to Sorkin, the film examines how those choices contributed to a wider set of problems involving misinformation, political polarisation and the potential damage social media can cause to democratic institutions. The film therefore moves beyond the familiar story of Facebook's beginnings and examines the



consequences of its enormous reach. As billions of people began using social media platforms to consume information, communicate and engage with political issues, questions surrounding their influence became increasingly significant. *The Social Reckoning* seeks to explore those questions through Zuckerberg's position at the heart of the narrative. Sorkin's comments suggest that the film will present a more critical examination of the technology industry and its relationship with society. Zuckerberg is no longer being portrayed simply as a young entrepreneur who created a revolutionary platform. Instead, the new story looks at the responsibilities and consequences that come

with controlling a company capable of shaping public conversations on a global scale. The contrast with The Social Network is particularly striking. Released in 2010, David Fincher's film, written by Sorkin, focused largely on the creation of Facebook and the disputes surrounding its early development. Eisenberg's portrayal of Zuckerberg became one of the most recognisable cinematic interpretations of the tech entrepreneur. politics and society, using Zuckerberg and Facebook as the entry point into a much larger discussion. The central question is not simply how a social media platform changed the world, but what happened after that transformation took place.

Dhurandhar Music Finds Strong Following in South Indian Gyms

New Deihl: Newly married actors Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna have joined the growing list of celebrities who are fans of *Dhurandhar*. During a recent conversation, the couple was asked about the Hindi songs that are currently popular in southern parts of India. Responding to the question, Vijay revealed that songs from *Dhurandhar* are being played frequently at gyms across South India. Vijay made the comment during a recent interaction with podcaster Shubhankar Mishra. While discussing music preferences and the popularity of Hindi songs in the South, the actor was asked which tracks were being played most often in the region.

Vijay admitted that he could not immediately recall the exact song titles. Instead, he asked the host to hum the songs so that he could identify them. During the conversation, he also mentioned that he listens to a significant amount of independent music. The discussion offered a glimpse into the music preferences of the actor and also highlighted the growing reach of Hindi film music beyond traditional Hindi-speaking markets. Vijay's observation about Dhurandhar songs being played regularly in gyms suggested that the film's music has found an audience among listeners in the South as well. The actor's comments came during a conversation that touched upon music and entertained outside the traditional commercial film industry. The mention

of Dhurandhar came in the context of a broader discussion about the popularity of Hindi music in South India. Hindi cinema and its music have traditionally enjoyed audiences across the country, and the actor's comments point to the continued presence of Bollywood tracks in everyday spaces such as gyms. Vijay's observation also comes at a time when music from Hindi films frequently travels beyond regional and linguistic boundaries through streaming platforms, social media and public spaces. Songs can gain popularity across different parts of India even when listeners do not necessarily speak the language in which they are performed. For Vijay and Rashmika, who recently got married, the discussion also offered an opportunity to talk about their personal exposure to music. The couple was asked to identify Hindi songs that were being played widely in the South, leading Vijay to mention the repeated presence of *Dhurandhar* tracks at gyms. Rather than naming a specific song, Vijay relied on the host's help and asked him to hum the tune. His inability to immediately recall the exact title did not prevent him from pointing out that Dhurandhar music was being played frequently in South Indian gyms. The exchange also reflected the informal nature of the conversation with Shubhankar Mishra. Vijay spoke about his music preferences while responding to questions about popular Hindi songs in the South.



His comments have drawn attention to the reach of Dhurandhar's music, particularly among listeners outside the Hindi-speaking belt. The actor's reference to gyms suggests that the songs are being heard in environments where energetic film tracks are often used as background or workout music. The popularity of film music in gyms is not unusual, as upbeat songs are commonly used during exercise sessions. Vijay's observation, however, highlighted the extent to which Hindi film songs can become part of the listening habits of audiences in different regions. The actor's mention of independent music also added another dimension to the conversation.

He said that he listens to a lot of independent music, indicating that his personal playlist includes music beyond major film production. Listeners without relying entirely on traditional film or music industry channels.

Drishyam 3 Ending Took 100 Drafts to Perfect, Writer Reveals

New Deihl: Screenwriter Aamil Keeyan Khan has revealed that developing the ending of *Drishyam 3*, titled *Drishyam: The Conclusion*, was an extensive writing process that required more than 100 drafts. In a recent interview, Aamil opened up about the challenges involved in bringing the popular franchise to its third instalment and explained why creating the story proved particularly demanding. According to the screenwriter, one of the biggest challenges was developing an entirely new narrative for the third film while ensuring that it remained faithful to the essence of the *Drishyam* franchise. The writing team reportedly wanted to move the story forward without simply relying on or borrowing from the original source material. The task became especially difficult because the franchise already has a strong identity and a loyal audience. The earlier films established a distinctive combination of suspense, family drama and crime, with the story built around an ordinary family



Under the agreement, India expects to attract investment worth \$100 billion and generate 1 million direct jobs over the next 15 years. Modi said the partnership would create new opportunities for businesses and contribute to stronger economic ties between India and Switzerland as well as the wider EFTA grouping. Highlighting the long-standing relationship between the two countries, Modi described India-Switzerland friendship as "centuries-old". He referred to historical connections involving prominent Indian figures and Switzerland, including Swami Vivekananda, who, according to Modi, saw a glimpse of the Hi-

malayas in the Swiss Alps during the 19th century. The Prime Minister also recalled Mahatma Gandhi's association with Switzerland and said such historical memories continue to form an important part of the close relationship between the two countries.

Modi said the nature of the bilateral partnership had evolved significantly over time, with innovation, infrastructure and advanced technology now emerging as key areas of cooperation. He said the latest summit-level discussions would provide fresh momentum to the relationship and help The discussions between Modi and Parant platform for in-

creasing standing friendship while creating new avenues for collaboration in emerging and strategic areas: The Conclusion*, that balance appears to have required extensive experimentation, with the climax undergoing more than 100 drafts before the writers arrived at the version they were satisfied with. attempting to protect itself from extraordinary circumstances. For the third instalment, the writers had to find a fresh direction without losing the elements that made the previous films successful. Aamil explained that arriving at the final climax required repeated attempts. More than 100 versions of the script were reportedly explored before the team was satisfied with the ending. The extensive rewriting reflects the importance of the climax in a franchise where twists, revelations and decisions to avoid depending on the original source material added another layer to the writing process. Instead, the ending needed to provide a satisfying payoff while maintaining the element of surprise.

Knee Injury Affects Amitabh Bachchan's Sleep During KBC 18 Shoot



New Deihl: Here's a fully rephrased version in a clean entertainment-news style: Amitabh Bachchan has opened up about his demanding work routine while shooting for Kaun Banega Crorepati Season 18, revealing that his packed schedule often leaves him with little time to get adequate rest. At 83, the veteran actor continues to maintain a busy professional life, but he admitted that balancing long hours of work with sufficient sleep can be challenging. In a recent blog post, Amitabh reflected on the importance of proper sleep and

described a good night's rest as one of the most effective ways for the human body to recover. Despite recognising its importance, the actor said he often struggles to find enough time to follow a healthy sleep routine because of his professional commitments.

Writing about his routine, Amitabh said that nighttime sleep is the "best repair mechanism" for the human body.

However, he acknowledged that finding sufficient time to sleep has become difficult amid his ongoing work schedule. The actor also spoke about his intention to retire early at night so that he can wake up on time for work the following morning. His comments reflected the disciplined routine he continues to follow despite his age and recent health setback. Amitabh described the experience of preparing for another early workday as one filled with thoughts, ideas and renewed motivation. He wrote about the drive he feels while working towards goals and said that this sense of purpose gives him the energy to continue moving forward. His blog suggested that, despite the physical demands of his schedule, he remains deeply

committed to his work. The actor spoke about the satisfaction and motivation that come from pursuing goals he has set for himself, describing the feeling as a source of immense energy. However, Amitabh's demanding routine comes at a time when he is also recovering from a recent knee injury. The actor sustained the injury after slipping and falling on the set of KBC 18 during a shoot. The incident affected his ability to remain standing for extended periods. During a recent episode of the quiz show, Amitabh remained seated while delivering his opening monologue instead of following his usual practice of stand al practice of standing at the centre of the stage. He subsequently explained to viewers why he had changed his routine. The actor revealed that he had injured his knee after slipping and falling during the previous day's shoot. He said that he normally delivers his opening monologue while standing at the centre, but the injury made it difficult for him to remain on his feet for long. Despite the setback, in maintaining the schedule, preparing for early workdays and managing rest alongside professional responsibilities.

Shekhar Suman Defends Sanjay Dutt Over 'No Peace in India' Remark



New Deihl: Mark Zuckerberg is set to return as a central figure on the big screen, but the version portrayed in The Social Reckoning is expected to be very different from the young Harvard student played by Jesse Eisenberg in The Social Network 16 years ago.

The new film takes a much darker look at Facebook and the consequences of decisions made at the top of the social media giant. Director Aaron Sorkin, who is behind the

new film, has revealed that The Social Reckoning explores the growing concerns surrounding social media and its impact on society. Rather than focusing primarily on Facebook's origins and the creation of the platform, the film turns its attention to the

Sorkin's latest comments indicate that the film intends to confront difficult questions rather than offer a straightforward celebration or condemnation of Facebook. By focusing on misinformation, political division and democracy, the director appears to be using Zuckerberg's story to examine the broader impact of social media on modern society. As The Social Reckoning prepares to bring Zuckerberg back into the cinematic spotlight, the film promises

a significantly darker chapter than its predecessor. The emphasis is now on accountability, influence and the consequences of decisions made by one of the world's most powerful technology figures. controversies that emerged as the company grew into one of the most influential forces in the digital world. At the centre of the story is Zuckerberg and the decisions associated with the development and operation of Facebook. According to Sorkin, the film examines written by Sorkin, focused largely on the creation of Facebook and the disputes surrounding its early development. Eisenberg's portrayal of Zuckerberg became one of the most recognisable cinematic interpretations of the tech entrepreneur.

Aman Sehrawat and Sujeet Kalkal lead India's best Asian Games wrestling campaign since 1962



Aichi-Nagoya: India had its best Asian Games wrestling campaign in more than six decades, winning six medals -- two gold, two silver, and two bronze -- as Aman Sehrawat and Sujeet Kalkal emerged as champions and the country's grapplers made their presence known in the freestyle and Greco-Roman categories. According to Olympics.com, India's six medal haul was its greatest in the Asian Games since Jakarta 1962, when the country earned 12 medals—three gold, six silver, and three bronze. India won two gold medals at Aichi-Nagoya: Aman in men's freestyle 57kg and Sujeet in men's freestyle 65kg. Antim Panghal and Nitesh Siwach won silver medals. Deepak Punia and Sunil Kumar won bronze medals. Aman, India's youngest Olympic medalist, put up one of the most spectacular performances of the campaign, beating defending world champion Han Chong Song of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 11-7 in the 57kg final. The Paris 2024 bronze medalist looked to have the upper hand after taking a 6-1 lead, but Han came back to lead 7-6. Aman responded with a crucial four-point move to regain the advantage at 10-7 before an unsuccessful challenge from Han's corner handed him another point and effectively sealed the gold. Han had won both the 57kg World Championships and Asian Championships titles in 2025, making Aman's victory one of India's significant wrestling wins at the Games. Aman had begun his campaign with a 20-9 technical superiority victory

over Japan's Yamato Ogawa before defeating Kazakhstan's Nurdanaitanov 12-1 in the quarter-finals. He then produced a comeback in the semi-finals against Tajikistan's Aiaal Belolyubskii. Trailing 6-2 after the opening period, Aman turned the contest around to win 14-8 and book his place in the final. His gold was India's second wrestling title at Aichi-Nagoya after Sujeet Kalkal had won the men's freestyle 65kg category on Friday. Sujeet's victory further strengthened India's presence in the freestyle divisions and gave the country two men's wrestling gold medals at the same Asian Games. Antim Panghal added a silver in the women's 53kg category, finishing runner-up to Japan's Moe Kiyooka. Kiyooka, the 2024 world champion in the 55kg category, defeated Antim 9-1 in the final after leading 2-0 following the opening period. Antim, who won bronze at the Hangzhou Asian Games, had earlier produced a strong run to reach the final. She opened with a 9-0 victory over Kazakhstan's Shugyla Omirbek before beating Uzbekistan's Sakibjamal Esbosynova by fall in the quarter-finals. The Indian then overcame an early deficit to defeat China's reigning Asian champion Zhang Jin 6-1 in the semi-finals. The silver marked Antim's second consecutive Asian Games medal and added another podium finish to her growing international record. Deepak Punia, meanwhile, secured his second successive Asian Games medal by winning bronze in the men's freestyle 97kg category. Deepak defeated Mongo-

lia's Gankhuyag Ganbaatar 2-1 in the bronze-medal bout after missing out on a place in the final with a narrow 9-8 loss to Uzbekistan's Sherzod Poyonov. The Indian had begun his campaign with a 12-2 technical superiority win over China's Junpeng Zhou and received a quarter-final walkover against Hong Kong China's Wui Fung Vincent Li. Deepak's bronze followed the silver he won at Hangzhou 2023. India's other silver came in Greco-Roman wrestling, where Nitesh Siwach finished runner-up in the 97kg category. Sunil Kumar completed India's medal tally with bronze in Greco-Roman 87kg, ensuring the country had representation on the podium in both freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling. There were also narrow misses for several Indian wrestlers. Sagar Jaglan lost his men's freestyle 74kg bronze-medal bout by fall to Kazakhstan's Nurkozha Kaippanov, the 2024 world champion. In the women's 57kg category, Manisha Bhanwala began with a win over South Korea's Youngjin Kwon by fall but was eliminated in the quarter-finals after losing 3-0 to Japan's Olympic champion and two-time world champion Akari Fujinami. Fujinami's subsequent failure to reach the final ended Manisha's chances of entering the repechage. India's six-medal haul at Aichi-Nagoya represented a significant improvement over several recent Asian Games campaigns. The country had won two wrestling gold medals at Bangkok 1978 and Jakarta 2018, but finished with only three medals at both editions. The benchmark remained Jakarta 1962, where Indian wrestlers produced 12 medals, including three gold, six silver and three bronze. Aichi-Nagoya therefore marked India's strongest wrestling performance since that historic campaign, with two gold medals providing the headline achievement and four additional podium finishes underlining the depth of the contingent. Aman and Sujeet's gold medals, Antim and Nitesh's silver medals, and Deepak and Sunil's bronze medals provided India with a balanced return across the wrestling competition, capping a remarkable campaign for the country's grapplers at the 2026 Asian Games.

Interstate heroin network busted in Uttar Pradesh drugs worth Rs 50 crore recovered



New Delhi, Oct 05: The Delhi authorities have uncovered an interstate heroin supply network and an illicit heroin production plant in Lucknow, detaining four persons and seizing 7.076 kg of heroin, according to authorities. According to the police, the whole confiscated heroin is expected to be worth Rs 50 crore on the international market. The seizure comprises 6.275 kg of newly made heroin discovered at an illicit production plant in Sita Colony, Jankipuram, Lucknow. The operation began on September 16 when the Special Staff acquired information concerning drugs movement in the Begumpur region. Acting on a tip, police stopped

a Suzuki Grand Vitara in Sector 32, Begumpur, and detained 58-year-old Laxman Hooda, a Rohtak, Haryana resident. Police seized 300 grams of heroin and Rs 3 lakh in cash from his hands. The car was also confiscated, and a FIR under the NDPS Act was filed at the Begumpur Police Station. During further investigation, police arrested Anil, alias Bhola, 51, from Raghbir Nagar in Delhi, on September 17. Around 501 grams of heroin was recovered from his Mahindra XUV-700. Police said Anil is a proclaimed offender and parole jumper in an NDPS case registered at Bhalswa Dairy police station.

Investigators then traced the suspected main source supplier and manufacturing network through technical surveillance and human intelligence. On October 4, the police team raided an alleged heroin manufacturing facility in Sita Colony, Jankipuram, Lucknow, and arrested 35-year-old Bablu, a resident of Bareilly. The raid led to the recovery of 6.275 kg of freshly manufactured heroin. Police also recovered 2.504 kg of sodium, 787 grams of acetic anhydride, a gas cylinder, mixer grinder, utensils, a tub, polythene, an electronic weighing machine, wooden basket and other material allegedly used in the illegal manu-

facturing process. Based on information provided by Bablu, police traced Rukhsar Ali, alias Raju, who was allegedly the main source supplier and owner of the manufacturing facility. He was arrested from Bareilly after police pursued him for around 120 kilometres. According to police, the inquiry has uncovered an interstate heroin supply and production network that operates between Delhi-NCR and Uttar Pradesh. The four arrested accused reportedly played various roles in the network, including source supply, transportation, manufacture, and facility management. Bablu and Rukhsar Ali had already been involved in NDPS cases, while Anil is also facing an NDPS case. The police stated that the discovery of commercial amounts of heroin at various points of the supply chain, as well as the seizure of raw materials and manufacturing equipment, represented a significant breakthrough against the narcotics network. Further research is being conducted to discover the whole supply chain, financial ties, acquisition of precursor and production materials, and other individuals allegedly associated with the network.

Same Medal Count, Bigger Impact: How Indian Women Outperform Men At The Asian Games 2026

Aichi-Nagoya: The Asian Games 2026 have concluded, with India winning 85 medals, 21 of which were gold. Despite having 21 fewer medals than the previous edition, Aichi-Nagoya 2026 introduced a lot of new heroes to the Indian athletic world. One striking element of the just finished games was that women won more gold medals for India than men did. This eventually helped India retain fourth place in the medal tally, as it had in the previous edition, just ahead of Uzbekistan. Over the previous few weeks, Indian women have produced multiple moments of national pride, including Vithya Ramraj in athletics, Kumkum Mohod in archery, Pranati Urs in golf, and Parveen Hooda in boxing. In total, while both men and women won 38 medals each, the women won 11 gold medals compared to seven



by men. Indian women won three gold medals in archery, two in boxing, and one each in athletics, shooting, golf, cricket, kabaddi and hockey. In archery, Kumkum Mohod secured India's first-ever Asiad gold in the women's individual recurve event. A similarly historic first took place in golf, where Pranati Urs became the first Indian woman to win gold in the individual event. India's women's crick-

et and kabaddi teams entered the Asian Games as favourites to win gold, and delivered, not showing a hint of cracking under pressure. But the Indian women's hockey team ended a 44-year wait for Asiad gold, being the class of the tournament and defeating favourites China in the final. Parveen Hooda and Lovlina Borgohain won gold medals in their respective individual boxing divisions, making

the Games a memorable experience for the country in the sport. Neeru Dhandla led the way to an unprecedented trap shooting gold medal, as well as a mixed team gold. And Vithya Ramraj's sprint to the finish line in the women's 4x400m relay, when she won gold with Kiran Pahal, MR Poovamma, and Prachi Choudhary, was undoubtedly India's best moment at Aichi-Nagoya 2026.

Single-Use Plastic Bottles Are Prohibited At Delhi Sports Complexes

New Delhi, Oct 05: Single-use plastic bottles have been prohibited at DDA sports complexes as part of a month-long cleaning push in Delhi. According to the administration, around 2.5 tons of rubbish had been collected from athletic facilities as of Sunday. Water dispensers, steel dustbins, new green and blue twin bins for separating wet and dry trash, and anti-littering signage have been put at the facilities. The Delhi Development Authority's month-long 'Swachhata Hi Seva' program across parks, open spaces, sports complexes, and leisure facilities began on September 17. It involves hygiene and sanitation efforts, planting pushes, environmental awareness campaigns, and public engagement. The exercise has covered Saket Sports Complex, Netaji Subhash Sports Complex, Squash and Badminton Stadium, Hari Nagar Sports Complex, Paschim Vihar Sports Complex, Dwarka Sports Complexes in Sectors 11 and 17, Major Dhyan Chand Sports Complex, Rashtriya Swabhiman Khel Parisar, Poorv Delhi Khel Parisar, Chilla Sports Complex and Yamuna Sports Complex. The Qutab Golf Course and DDA Lake View Golf Course have also been covered under the drive. The campaign is being conducted under the guidance of Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, who is also chairman of the DDA. The DDA has also launched three projects to promote cleanliness in parks and other public places.

"Agent Promised Rs 1.2 Lakh Salary": An Oman-Stranded Telangana Employee

New Delhi, Oct 05: Nirmal, a migrant worker from Telangana, claims he was deceived into working for a firm in Oman after an agent offered him a position with a nice wage. Borubonthala Nagesh, a farmer from Kotha Tarlapadu village, said he went to Oman because an agent from the Jagtial district offered him work. Nagesh, on the other hand, said that while in Oman, he was compelled to work as a domestic worker. In a video appeal from Oman, he also stated that he has not been receiving appropriate salaries or food and is having difficulty coming home. "An agent collected Rs 80,000 from me, offering me a salary of Rs 1,20,000 and claiming I wouldn't have to pay rent. However, once I arrived here, there was no decent employment, the firm was poor, and I am having significant problems. In an SOS video, he stated that he only receives Rs 75 per day and lacks financial help. "The agent has cheated me and left me in a very difficult situation," he added, urging the Telangana government and the Center to act and return him to India. His arrest comes amid increased worries over international recruiting fraud employing Telangana workers. According to MEA statistics provided in Parliament, Telangana received 339 complaints of fraudulent overseas recruiting in the previous three years, making it one of the states with the most such complaints in the country. The majority of complaints involved unlicensed or unauthorized recruiting agents. Oman has also emerged as a significant destination in migrant-worker grievance cases. Gulf countries have received more than 80,000 complaints involving abuse, exploitation and workplace grievances between 2021 and 2025, with Oman accounting for about 13,000 com-



plaints. In August, a 45-year-old woman from Warangal, who allegedly endured 25 days of confinement and harassment in Muscat after being taken there on a tourist visa on the promise of a job, had returned to India. The woman, Mohammed Mahamuda, had travelled to Muscat on July 16 after an agent promised her domestic work. However, after reaching Oman, she was allegedly handed over to a sub-agent who seized her mobile phone and passport, confined her to a room and forced her to work against her wishes. She also alleged that she was subjected to harassment and physical assault during her confinement. A woman from Hyderabad had also faced similar ordeal. In a self-recorded video sent to a politician in July, 26-year-old Shabnam Begum said she traveled to Oman on March 26 after a local recruitment agent promised her a job as a housemaid. She claimed they made her work "day and night" without paying any salary for over three months. "They also didn't give me a mobile phone for a month and a half," she added in an emotional video sent to Hyderabad legislator Amjed Ullah Khan of the Majlis Bachao Tehreek. She said she was "tortured" and "beaten" and refused adequate nutrition.

"Proud of Silver, But Disappointed To Not Win Gold" Antim Panghal Following Asiad Success

Aichi-Nagoya: Antim Panghal, an Indian wrestler, was unhappy not to win the gold medal in the women's 53kg final at the Asian Games, but she was pleased with the silver she achieved after several outstanding performances. Antim lost the gold medal battle to Moe Kiyooka of Japan, who won the 55kg

gold medal at the 2024 World Championships. Antim has now improved her bronze medal from the Hangzhou Games 2023 to a silver in the Aichi-Nagoya Games, which she is happy of despite the final loss. Of course, I'm a little disappointed that I couldn't win gold, but I'm still very proud to have won a silver

medal for India at the Asian Games. Every athlete dreams of winning a medal for the country, and to be able to do that on this stage means a lot to me," she told me. The Haryana-born athlete endured rigorous training in preparation for the main events and pondered on the sacrifices she had to make.

Human Rights Body Takes Action Against Minors' Participation in Mumbai CJP Protest



Mumbai, Oct 05: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has opened its own investigation into accusations that underage children participated in a demonstration organized by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) in Mumbai's Shivaji Park. The commission has sent notifications to the Mumbai Police Commissioner, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), X Corp., and Maharashtra's Women and Child Development Department, requesting that they submit action taken

reports within a week. The National Human Rights Commission has instructed the Mumbai Police to investigate the circumstances surrounding the alleged involvement of juveniles in the rally. It has also requested that the police examine the organizers' precise responsibilities and take proper legal action if any cognizable offense is discovered. The charges include the potential that children were purposefully positioned during the demonstration to deter or limit police action. However, they are claims and

are being investigated. The human rights body has also asked authorities to examine whether provisions of child protection laws, including the Juvenile Justice Act, may have been violated. The NHRC has sought preservation of digital evidence related to photographs, videos and social media posts showing the children during the demonstration. X Corp., which operates X, has been asked to preserve relevant digital records connected with the circulation of such material. This includes information

that could help investigators trace the source and circulation of the posts. The move is significant as photographs and videos from public protests can continue to circulate online even after the event, potentially exposing children to privacy and safety concerns. The Maharashtra Women and Child Development Department has been instructed to take adequate measures to guarantee the care, protection, and welfare of the youngsters who are claimed to have participated in the demonstration. The department is expected to determine if the youngsters require any protection or assistance, and to ensure that their rights are protected in line with existing child-protection legislation. The reports are anticipated to include the police investigation, the involvement of the protest organizers, action taken in response to any found infractions, and child protection measures implemented.

India Face Selection Calls on Bowling Balance Ahead of New Zealand Tour

New Delhi: India's senior selection committee is set to finalise the squads for the upcoming tour of New Zealand, with discussions expected to cover the T20I, ODI and Test teams as well as the India A squad.

The selection meeting is likely to be held within the next 48 hours and will be chaired by interim chief selector Pragyan Ojha. The selectors are awaiting an update on the fitness of fast bowler Prasidh Krishna before completing their plans for the tour.

The discussions come after India's three-match ODI series against the West Indies highlighted questions over the team's bowling resources. India secured the series 2-1 but lost the final match by five wickets after being unable to defend a



target of 352 runs.

The selectors are also expected to consider the possible return of Ishan Kishan to the red-ball setup. His inclusion could form part of the wider discussion over India's Test combination and squad depth ahead of the New Zealand assignment.

Bowling balance is likely to remain another key

consideration, particularly the combination of pace and spin options across the different formats. Fitness updates and recent performances could influence the final composition of the squads.

India's tour of New Zealand is scheduled to begin with a five-match T20I series on October 22, followed by the other format

assignments. The selection meeting will therefore determine the group of players who will form the core of India's squads for the multi-format tour.

The selectors will also have to consider workload management while choosing players for the three formats. Several members of the wider squad have been involved in demanding domestic and international schedules, making fitness and availability important factors in determining the final combinations.

The India A squad is expected to receive particular attention as the selectors look to provide opportunities to players who could form part of the senior team in the future. Performances in the second-string setup could also help the man-

agement assess options for longer-format cricket.

The New Zealand conditions are likely to make the choice of bowling combinations especially important. The selectors could weigh the experience of established fast bowlers against the need to give opportunities to emerging players who have performed consistently in domestic cricket.

The final squads will also provide an indication of India's planning across formats as the team enters another demanding international assignment. With separate requirements for T20Is, ODIs and Tests, the selectors will need to strike a balance between experienced campaigners, emerging players and those returning from injury.

India Turn Focus to Uruguay Friendly After Brazil Defeat

Kolkata: India will face Uruguay in an international friendly in Kolkata on October 6, with head coach Khalid Jamil expected to use the match as another opportunity to assess his squad against high-level opposition following the team's 4-0 defeat to Brazil.

The Indian side will enter the fixture looking to respond to the heavy loss against the five-time world champions. The Brazil match exposed the difference in quality between the two teams, but the Uruguay encounter will provide another demanding test for India against a side with a strong international pedigree.

The Uruguay players have also spent time exploring Kolkata ahead of the match. Members of the squad visited Eden Gardens, where they took part in an infor-



mal cricket session, providing a lighter moment before preparations for the football fixture resumed.

For Jamil, the back-to-back matches against Brazil and Uruguay offer valuable exposure for Indian players accustomed to competing at the highest level. The fixtures also give the coaching staff an opportunity to examine different combinations and assess players under pressure. Uruguay, two-time winners of the FIFA World Cup, will provide another stern chal-

lenge for the Indian team. The match is expected to attract considerable attention as India continues to seek opportunities to test itself against established international football sides.

With the Uruguay friendly following closely after the Brazil defeat, India's performance will be watched for signs of improvement in organisation, discipline and competitiveness. The fixture will also provide Jamil with another assessment point as he continues to shape the national team.

CM Punk and Tiffany Stratton Chase WWE Money in the Bank History

New Orleans: CM Punk and Tiffany Stratton will enter this year's WWE Money in the Bank ladder matches with an opportunity to achieve milestones that have never been reached in the competition's history.

Punk booked his place in the men's ladder match by defeating Finn Bálor and Gunther in a triple-threat encounter. The former WWE champion already holds a unique record in the Money in the Bank competition, having won the contract in consecutive years at WrestleMania 24 and WrestleMania 25.

A third victory would put Punk in a category of his own. If he manages to climb the ladder and retrieve the briefcase in New Orleans, he would become the first WWE superstar to win the men's Money in the Bank ladder match three times.

Stratton will have a similar opportunity in the women's competition after securing the final position by defeating Tatum Paxley

and Candice LeRae in a triple-threat match on SmackDown.

The former women's Money in the Bank winner claimed the briefcase in 2024 and later successfully cashed it in during early 2025 to capture her first WWE Women's Championship. Another victory would make Stratton the first woman to win the women's ladder match twice outright.

Her potential record comes with a historical qualification. Carmella is also listed as a two-time winner in some WWE records, but her first victory remains disputed because James Ellsworth retrieved the briefcase on her behalf. Stratton would therefore have the opportunity to establish an undisputed record through two direct ladder-match victories.

The men's field also includes Kevin Owens, Bron Breakker, Je'Von Evans, Trick Williams and Penta alongside Punk. The six competitors will be competing for the contract that

guarantees the holder a future opportunity to challenge for a world championship.

The women's match features Stratton, Roxanne Perez, Sol Ruca, Lola Vice, Jacy Jayne and Lash Legend. Each competitor will be seeking to secure the briefcase and the championship opportunity that comes with it.

The Money in the Bank ladder matches remain among WWE's most unpredictable contests, with competitors required to climb a ladder and retrieve a briefcase suspended above the ring. The winner can subsequently choose the timing of a championship cash-in, adding another strategic dimension to the competition.

For Punk and Stratton, however, the event carries an additional incentive. Both are former briefcase holders returning to a match in which another victory would allow them to establish a new chapter in WWE's Money in the Bank history.

Asian Games Gold Gives Fresh Push to Women's Hockey at Grassroots

New Delhi: India's women's hockey team's Asian Games gold medal has generated renewed interest in the sport at the grassroots level, with coaches and academies reporting greater enthusiasm among young girls following the team's historic triumph and qualification for the Los Angeles Olympics.

India defeated China 1-0 in the final to win the women's hockey gold at the Asian Games, ending a 44-year wait for the title. The victory also secured the team a direct berth at the Los Angeles Olympics, adding further significance to a result that has provided fresh momentum to women's hockey across the country.

The success has had a visible effect on young players and families considering hockey as a sporting pathway. Former India captain and coach Pritam Sivach described the achievement as an important boost for the



sport's development system, saying the performance of the national team has given aspiring players and local academies something tangible to look up to.

The influence of national players has also been particularly noticeable in emerging hockey regions. In Mizoram, coaches have pointed to the impact of Lalremsiami, whose rise from the northeastern state to the international stage has helped persuade young players and their families that a

career in hockey can be a realistic possibility.

The Asian Games victory has also strengthened confidence in India's domestic development structure. Former India international and coach Ajit Lakra said the achievement demonstrated that the country's grassroots system can produce players capable of reaching the highest level of international competition.

Many members of the current national team have progressed through junior

tournaments, district-level competitions and local academies before establishing themselves internationally. Their journeys have provided evidence of a pathway through which young players can move from grassroots training to national and international hockey.

Grassroots coaches, however, have cautioned that the current enthusiasm will need sustained support to translate into long-term growth. They have called for greater investment in synthet-

ic pitches, equipment and training facilities so that the growing number of young players can access regular and quality coaching. Coaches have further stressed the importance of long-term player development programmes that combine regular competition with specialised training and exposure to stronger opposition. Such measures could help ensure that the latest success produces a larger pool of players capable of progressing through the national system.

The Asian Games title has therefore provided more than a medal and an Olympic qualification. For India's women's hockey ecosystem, it has created a fresh source of motivation at the grassroots, while placing greater attention on the infrastructure and investment required to sustain that momentum.

Tobias Harris Listed Questionable for Spurs Opener With Calf Strain

San Antonio: San Antonio Spurs forward Tobias Harris is dealing with a left calf muscle strain sustained during training camp and has been listed as questionable for the team's NBA season opener against the Oklahoma City Thunder on October 20.

Harris missed the Spurs' weekend scrimmage after picking up the injury, with the coaching staff taking a cautious approach to his recovery. Head coach Mitch Johnson indicated that the team would not rush the veteran forward back into action and would allow the injury sufficient time to heal.

The Spurs are scheduled to begin their five-game preseason campaign on October 8 against the Atlanta Hawks.

Harris is expected to remain sidelined during the preseason while the medical staff monitors his condition and determines when he can safely resume basketball activities.

A full assessment is planned after the preseason, when the Spurs will have a clearer indication of whether Harris can be available for the opening



game of the regular season. No definite timetable has been set for his return.

Harris joined San Antonio during the offseason on a two-year, \$31 million contract and was brought in to strengthen the frontcourt around Victor Wembanyama. His experience and ability to operate in multiple positions were expected to give the Spurs additional options in their lineup.

The injury could affect the team's rotation because Harris is capable of playing both small forward and power forward. His

absence would therefore leave the coaching staff with adjustments to make across more than one position as the team prepares for the regular season.

San Antonio can rely on several members of its returning core while Harris is unavailable. Wembanyama, De'Aaron Fox, Stephen Castle, Devin Vassell and Julian Champagnie are among the players expected to carry larger responsibilities during the preseason.

The Spurs also have additional depth available through players including

Dylan Harper, Carter Bryant, Harrison Barnes and Keldon Johnson. Their performances during the preseason could help determine how the coaching staff distributes minutes if Harris remains unavailable.

For the Spurs, the priority will be ensuring that Harris is fully recovered rather than exposing him to further injury before the regular season begins. His progress over the coming weeks will determine whether he can take part in preparations for the October 20 opener.

The team's preseason schedule will provide an opportunity to assess alternative frontcourt combinations and test different rotations. Those adjustments could prove important if Harris requires additional recovery time beyond the preseason.

Harris's availability will ultimately depend on his response to treatment and rehabilitation. The Spurs are expected to make a more informed decision after completing their preseason programme and conducting the planned medical re-evaluation.

Elena Rybakina Withdraws From Wuhan Open to Recover From Injury

Wuhan: World No. 1 Elena Rybakina has withdrawn from the Wuhan Open, scheduled to be played from October 12 to 18, opting to take a break from competition as she recovers from a persistent lower-leg and foot problem.

The Kazakh player announced her decision following her unexpected first-round defeat at the China Open in Beijing. Rybakina said she needed time away from the tour to rest and recover, while apologising to her supporters and thanking them for their understanding.

Rybakina's campaign in Beijing ended with a three-set loss to world No. 118 Alina Charaeva. The Russian player defeated the top seed 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 in Rybakina's first competitive appearance since her victory at the US Open.

The US Open triumph was the third Grand Slam title of Rybakina's career and helped her rise to the top of the WTA rankings. However, the physical demands of the tournament appeared to aggravate an injury issue that has troubled her during the latter part of the season.

The same lower-leg and



foot problem had forced Rybakina to retire during her Cincinnati Open quarterfinal against Iga Świątek in August. Although she managed the condition during her successful US Open campaign, the issue resurfaced during her match in Beijing.

Her withdrawal from Wuhan gives Rybakina additional time to focus on recovery before returning to competitive action. The decision also comes at an important stage of the season, with the WTA Finals approaching.

Rybakina has already secured her place in the season-ending WTA Finals. She is provisionally expected to make her next appearance at the Ningbo Open, where she is the defending

champion, subject to her recovery and fitness.

The break is intended to allow the world No. 1 to manage the physical problem before resuming her schedule. Her return date will depend on how she responds to recovery in the coming weeks.

Rybakina's decision also underlines the physical demands placed on players during the final stretch of the tennis season. With tournaments taking place across Asia in quick succession, managing fitness has become an important consideration for leading players.

Her absence will also alter the competitive landscape at the Wuhan event, which is one of the major tournaments on the WTA calendar. The withdrawal means other

leading contenders will have an opportunity to strengthen their positions during the Asian swing.

For Rybakina, however, the immediate priority is to regain full fitness rather than risk aggravating the existing problem by returning prematurely. A sustained recovery could allow her to enter the final tournaments of the season in better physical condition.

The Kazakh star will also be looking to carry the momentum of her US Open success into the closing stages of the year once she returns. Her performance at the season-ending WTA Finals could become another major target after a campaign that has already brought her a Grand Slam title and the No. 1 ranking.