

Centre hands Nagaland blast probe to NIA

Kohima, July 29: The Government of India has formally handed over the investigation into the recent blast in Nagaland to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), underscoring the seriousness of the incident and the Centre's commitment to ensuring a thorough and impartial probe. The decision follows preliminary reports from state authorities indicating the use of sophisticated explosives and the possible involvement of organized groups. Officials stated that the transfer of the case to the NIA was necessary to leverage the agency's expertise in handling complex terror-related investigations and to ensure coordination across multiple jurisdictions. The blast, which occurred earlier this week, caused widespread alarm in the region and raised concerns about the safety of civilians and the stability of law-and-order in Nagaland. While local police registered the initial case and began inquiries, the Centre emphasized that the NIA's involvement would bring advanced forensic analysis, intelligence coordination, and specialized investigative capacity to the matter. Union Home Ministry officials noted that the NIA will examine all angles, including potential links to insurgent outfits, cross-border networks, and the procurement of explosives. The agency is expected to work closely with Nagaland Police, Assam Rifles, and other security agencies to gather evidence, identify suspects, and bring those responsible to justice. Political leaders and civil society groups in Nagaland welcomed the Centre's swift action, stating that the handover reflects recognition of the gravity of the incident. They urged investigators to prioritize transparency and accountability, while ensuring that innocent civilians are not harassed during the process. The Centre reiterated its commitment to maintaining peace and security in the Northeast, highlighting that the region's stability is vital for national integration and development.

Assam Assembly clears Higher Education Council Bill



Guwahati, July 29: The Assam Legislative Assembly has passed the State Higher Education Council Bill, 2026, marking a significant step toward strengthening governance, coordination, and quality assurance in the state's higher education sector. The legislation provides for the establishment of a State Higher Education Council, envisioned as a statutory body to oversee academic planning, resource mobilization, and policy implementation across universities and colleges in Assam. The council will serve as a bridge between institutions and the government, ensuring that higher education aligns with national standards while addressing

regional needs. Formulating strategies for equitable access to higher education. Promoting excellence in teaching, research, and innovation. Advising the government on funding priorities and infrastructure development. Monitoring compliance with quality benchmarks and accreditation norms. The passage of the bill comes amid growing demand for reforms in higher education to meet the aspirations of Assam's youth and the challenges of a rapidly evolving knowledge economy. Lawmakers emphasized that the council will help streamline decision-making, reduce duplication of efforts, and foster collaboration among institutions.

IMD forecasts for very heavy rainfall likely over the State in coming 3-4 days

Guwahati, July 29: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted today of heavy to very heavy rainfall along with thunderstorm from 30th July to 1st August, 2026 at the isolated places across Assam and the neighbouring states like East Siang, Lohit, Namsai, Longding, Papumpare, Lower Subansiri & Lower Dibang valley of Arunachal Pradesh which may affect the neighbouring districts i.e. Tinsukia, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts of Assam. The orange alert has been issued for Tinsukia district. Further, orange alert was also issued for Mon, Mokokchung and Wokha districts of Nagaland which may affect the neighbouring districts like Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat districts. The weather pattern suggests that thunderstorm with lightning with heavy rainfall (6-11 cm/day) at most places of East Siang, Lohit, Namsai, Longding, Lower Subansiri & Lower Dibang val-



ley along with very heavy rainfall (12-20 cm/day) is very likely to occur at isolated places over Papumpare district which may affect all the neighbouring districts of Assam. It may aggravate water logging, flooding, flash floods, slow vehicular movement, and increase the risk of localized landslides in vulnerable pockets. The

district authorities and ASDMA are closely monitoring the situation and emergency response systems are being kept on alert. In view of the situation, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) requests all the citizens of the concerned districts to take all necessary precautions and remain vigilant. Daily com-

muters and long-distance travellers are requested to plan their routines accordingly, avoiding unnecessary movement during periods of intense rainfall. Residents in low-lying and hill-side areas should stay alert for any signs of flooding or landslides. The status of the situation would be updated by ASDMA on its official

website i.e. <https://asdma.assam.gov.in/resource/assam-weather-forecast> and on all its social media handles from time to time for general awareness. Hence, the public is urged to stay tuned to official weather updates and follow advisories issued by local authorities to ensure safety during this prolonged spell of rain. Furthermore, ASDMA emphasizes the importance of community-level preparedness. Local clubs, youth organizations, and village committees are encouraged to assist vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities in relocating to safer areas if required. Farmers and livestock owners should take preventive measures to protect their crops and animals from inundation. By working together and maintaining a spirit of solidarity, communities can reduce the impact of this severe weather event and ensure that timely assistance reaches those in need.

BJP MLA urges MP to shield charities from FCRA changes

Shillong, July 29: BJP legislator Alexander L. Hek has appealed to Meghalaya's Rajya Sabha member James P.K. Sangma to ensure that genuine charitable organisations, including Christian institutions and non-governmental organisations, are not adversely affected by the implementation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA). In a letter addressed to the Rajya Sabha MP, Hek said charitable institutions have, for decades, played a vital role in providing education, healthcare, shelter and social support to the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society without discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, tribe or community. "Their contribution to nation-building and social welfare is immeasurable.



They have complemented the efforts of governments in reaching the most neglected and marginalised communities," Mr. Hek stated, urging that the FCRA framework must not inadvertently penalise institutions that have consistently upheld transparency and accountability. The legislator highlighted concerns that recent amendments to the FCRA could

impose stricter compliance requirements, potentially disrupting the flow of foreign contributions that many charitable organisations rely upon to sustain their operations. He warned that such disruptions could directly affect the delivery of essential services to vulnerable populations, including children, women, and the elderly.

Chakma council seeks aid over Rs 63 crore shortfall

Aizawl, July 29: The Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) has sought urgent financial assistance from the Mizoram government after a Rs 63 crore budget shortfall left its employees and pensioners without salaries and pensions for four-and-a-half months, an official said on Wednesday. The issue was raised by CADC chief executive member (CEM) Nirupam Chakma during a meeting with Chief Minister Lalduhoma here on Tuesday, the official said. The meeting, held at the chief minister's office, also focused on expediting several long-pending development projects in the CADC area, including the completion of the new secretariat building, operationalisation of a students' hostel, and infrastruc-



ture proposals for schools and fisheries. Raising the council's financial concerns, the CEM informed the CM that the CADC faced a Rs 63 crore shortfall during the 2025-26 financial year, resulting in the non-payment of salaries and pensions for four and a half months, he said. He appealed to the state government for additional financial support to clear the pending dues. Chakma also

urged the state government to support the implementation of the CADC's development plan, which had earlier been submitted to the governor. In response, the CM advised the council to prepare separate concept notes and Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for each project component and submit them through the prescribed channels for consideration. Among the major projects discussed was the

completion of the new CADC secretariat building, which has remained unfinished for the past 12 years after the final instalment of funds sanctioned under the 13th Finance Commission Award lapsed. Lalduhoma instructed the council to prepare a detailed estimate of the remaining work and submit it to the department concerned for further action. The CEM further sought financial assistance for furnishing the newly constructed CADC students' hostel in Aizawl to enable its early commissioning. He also requested that two school infrastructure projects and a fish pond development project be included in the state government's priority list, noting that all three proposals are already under consideration.

Arunachal govt committed to resolving all pending boundary disputes: Home min

Itanagar, July 29: Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister Mama Natung on Tuesday asserted that the state government was committed to resolving all pending boundary disputes through regional committees.

Inaugurating a Rs 3-crore fire station at Yupia in Papum Pare district, he said that Assam plays a crucial role in fostering regional harmony, while urging people on both sides of the inter-state border to maintain peace.

Highlighting the recent disturbances along the inter-state boundary in Tarasso area, he said the state government has resolved border disputes in five districts and discussions were underway in the remaining districts.

Besides inaugurating the fire station, Natung also flagged off a fleet of newly inducted vehicles.

The facility has been executed by the Urban Development Department and aims to boost disaster preparedness and emergency response across the district, an official statement said.

Addressing the gathering,



the minister said the state government has constructed 13 new fire stations across district headquarters over the last three years.

Additionally, 337 new posts were created in the department during this period, raising the total strength of fire-fighters in Arunachal Pradesh to 811 personnel.

Natung said the Arunachal Pradesh Police's anti-narcot-

ics 'Operation Dawn' has led to significant crackdowns on drug peddlers and trafficking networks over the last four years.

On July 15, tensions flared up along the Arunachal Pradesh-Assam inter-state in Sango village in Tarasso area of Papum Pare district following arson and firing incidents between residents and Assam forest personnel, officials

said.

The forest personnel from Assam's Behali Reserve Forest attempted to stop the alleged construction of unauthorised houses in an area claimed by Assam as part of the reserve forest. During the operation, the occupants allegedly opened fire, with nearly 50 rounds reportedly being fired. No injuries were reported in the incident, they

said.

The land remains under dispute, with Assam maintaining that it falls within the Behali Reserve Forest, while local residents claim ownership, asserting that families had been living there for long.

MLAs of both sides of the disputed area, along with officials, met after the incident and resolved to maintain status quo along the boundary.

Postal articles looted, burnt in Ukhrul

Imphal, July 29: Postal service employees in Manipur staged a protest at the Imphal head post office Tuesday, denouncing the burning of postal articles allegedly by armed Kuki individuals enforcing a counter economic blockade along NH-202 (Imphal-Ukhrul road). On Monday, four to five armed men reportedly hijacked a mail van at Shangkai village and burnt 36 out of 53 postal bags. The consignments included passports, ATM cards, educational certificates, medicines and other vital parcels. Protesters described the incident as a "heinous act" and alleged lapses on the part of security forces. They demanded immediate arrest of the culprits and fool-proof security for mail vans. A banner at the protest read: "Strongly condemn the heinous act of burning post articles and property at Shangkai Kuki village near Litan police station, Ukhrul district by miscreants."



Hussain, who stated he was forced at gunpoint to drive the van to Shangkai ground where the bags were burnt. He alleged the armed men threatened him by pressing a gun to his thigh, preventing him from speaking to security personnel. Elderly villagers later intervened to stop the vehicle from being set ablaze. The FIR was filed under multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) including obstruction of public servants, unlawful assembly, mischief, criminal intimidation, and under the Arms Act for unauthorized possession of prohibited weapons. Reports said members of the Working Committee of Kuki Civil Society Organisations

(WCKCSOs), Ukhrul continued the blockade Tuesday, halting movement along NH-202 and camping overnight at Shangkai to prevent passage of goods. The blockade came into effect from midnight of July 26. Civil society groups and local residents have expressed concern over the growing impact of economic blockades and armed interventions on essential services. Analysts warn that such incidents undermine public trust in state institutions and exacerbate ethnic tensions in Manipur. Postal authorities have appealed for urgent government intervention to restore services and ensure the safety of employees and consignments.

Shillong Lawyer Investigated Intern Alleges Molestation

Shillong, July 29: A senior Shillong lawyer faces criminal charges following a molestation complaint from a law intern. The victim filed an FIR at the Sadar Police Station after an incident occurred Tuesday at a Keating Road office chamber. The student, who began her internship last week, claims the advocate lured her into a private room at 3:16 PM under the guise of retrieving case books. He allegedly grabbed and molested her. She escaped, but he reportedly cornered her again while she collected more books.

He then offered her 500 rupees. The intern refused the cash, but she alleges he forced the money into her blazer. She left the bills on a sofa and fled the scene crying. The victim has since warned others, stating, “I appeal to other law students to be careful while selecting advocates. There may be others involved in indecent behaviour or sexual exploitation.”

The HNYF East Khasi Hills unit supported the intern during her filing. HNYF president Steve Khyriem demanded the advocate lose his license and told the Bar Association that such behavior must not be tolerated. Police are currently investigating the matter. The Bar Association has not yet issued a comment.

Meghalaya High Court Rejects Moral Objections Licensed Liquor Shop



Shillong, July 29: The Meghalaya High Court ruled that moral objections from church leaders and local committees cannot force a licensed liquor store to close. Justice H.S. Thangkhiew ordered authorities to allow a retail Indian Made Foreign Liquor outlet to operate in the West Garo Hills district. The store owner holds a valid license and followed all state procedures. She moved her shop from Jengjal market to Danakgre after getting a no-objection certificate from the local Nokma. The Excise Department approved the shift in January 2025. Despite this, the Superintendent of Excise ordered her to shut down following pressure from local elders.

Official inquiries confirmed the shop violates no laws. It sits more than 200 metres from any church, school, or hospital. The court noted that another bar operates just 105 metres away. Justice Thangkhiew held that the objections were based “on moral grounds, rather than legal or other substantial grounds” that would justify revoking a licence.

The court also noted that illegal liquor trade is widespread in the area. A legal shop could help stop this black market. While the court stated there is no fundamental right to trade in liquor, it confirmed that a government-issued license creates a legal right. This right demands due process. Officials must allow the shop to open now.

State Election Commission is set to remove 150,000 voters from the electoral rolls

Shillong, July 29: Meghalaya’s electoral landscape is set for a massive purge as nearly 1.5 lakh voters—over 6% of the state’s total electorate—have been flagged for potential removal in a final push to clean up the rolls before the August 5 draft publication.

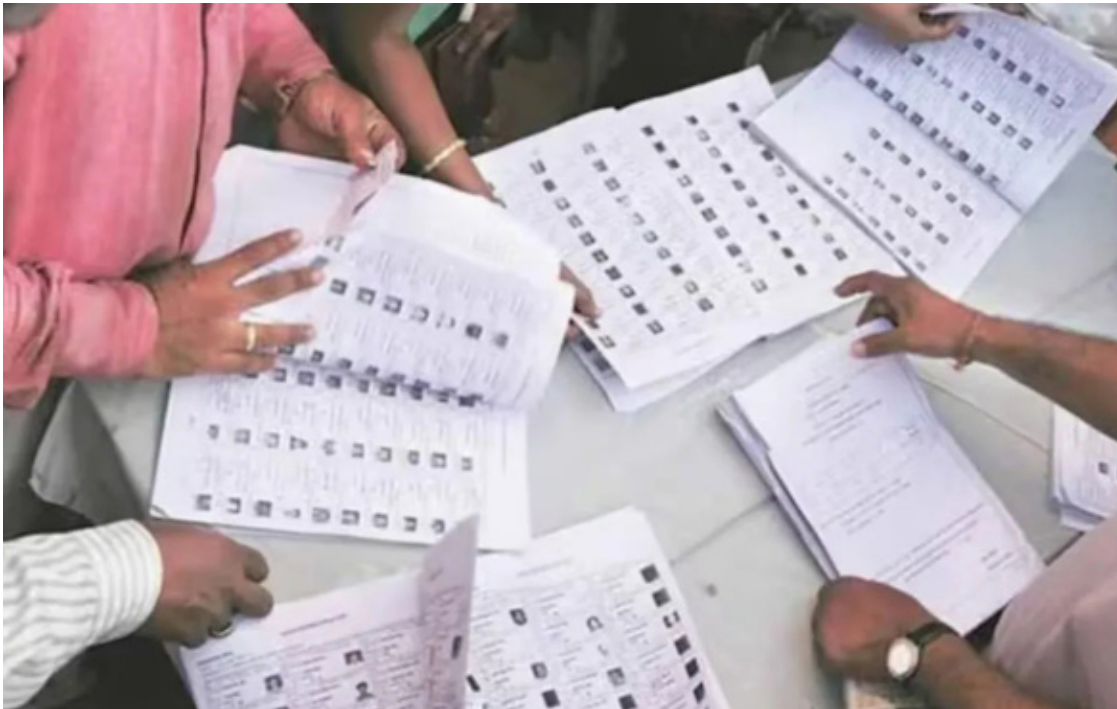
The ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) has identified 1,49,656 voters under the Absent, Shifted, Dead, and Duplicate (ASDD) category. With the deadline for submitting verified enumeration forms ending Wednesday, election authorities warned that those who fail to act risk immediate exclusion from the draft electoral roll.

The scale of the revision is significant for a state with only 23.49 lakh voters, where victory margins are often narrow. The flagged list includes 74,851 deceased electors, 28,826 absent voters, 37,914 shifted electors, and 5,899 duplicate entries.

While the Chief Electoral Officer’s (CEO) office reported a 99.6% distribution rate for enumeration forms, the data reveals a critical bottleneck in verification. Approximately 2.24 lakh forms—nearly 10% of the total—have yet to be geographically mapped. The mapping deficit is highest in Ri-Bhoi, where 23.45% of forms remain unmapped, followed by South West Khasi Hills at 14.53%.

Though officials previously assured that genuine voters should not panic, the looming deadline creates an urgent situation for residents to ensure their names are not erroneously purged. Voters who have moved within their constituencies or have not been home during recent Booth Level Officer (BLO) visits are particularly at risk of being marked as “shifted” or “absent.”

The CEO, BDR Tiwari, clarified that all such cases will be processed strictly in accordance with



the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, following due verification and after providing adequate opportunity to the concerned electors or their family members, wherever applicable.

Election authorities have urged electors to submit completed forms to BLOs or via the online voter service portal. The draft electoral roll will be published on August 5, followed by a window for claims and objections before the final roll is prepared. The updated electoral roll prepared under the SIR 2026 will serve as one of the key parameters for any future delimitation exercise in Meghalaya, informed Tiwari while addressing a press conference on the eve of the completion of the house-to-house distribution and digitization of Enumeration Forms (EFs) on Tuesday.

Tiwari stated that the revised electoral database would play an important role whenever the delimitation process is undertaken in the state.

The Chief Electoral Officer also

chaired a meeting with representatives of recognised national and state political parties to review the progress of SIR 2026 and discuss the remaining activities before the publication of the Draft Electoral Roll, during which the latest status of Enumeration Form distribution and digitisation, verification of ASDD cases, and other field-level activities were shared.

He urged political parties to continue extending their full cooperation to ensure that every eligible elector is included before the conclusion of the revision exercise.

Appreciating the constructive role played by political parties, the CEO acknowledged the contribution of Booth Level Agents (BLAs) in assisting electors, facilitating field verification, and enhancing transparency throughout the revision process.

He noted that the close coordination between the election machinery and political stakeholders has been instrumental in the successful implementation of the SIR across

Meghalaya.

Tiwari further highlighted that regular review meetings and weekly video conferences have been conducted with District Election Officers (DEOs), Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) to closely monitor the progress of the exercise, resolve field-level issues, and ensure adherence to the timeline prescribed by the Election Commission of India.

Number of polling stations goes up

In another significant development, Tiwari announced that the Election Commission of India has approved the rationalisation of polling stations in Meghalaya, resulting in the addition of 86 new polling stations. Consequently, the total number of polling stations in the state has increased from 3,551 to 3,637, aimed at improving accessibility and strengthening electoral infrastructure

Chief Minister of Assam expresses gratitude to the Prime Minister for his ‘personal attention’

Guwahati, July 29: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his “personal attention” to the Assam flood, which has claimed 68 lives so far while over 4.45 lakh people continue to reel under the deluge.

He said the state government has been able to reach all affected villages and was working on a war footing to provide relief to the flood-hit population.

PM Modi on Tuesday held a meeting with Union ministers and BJP MPs belonging to Assam.

Parliament House complex to review the state’s flood situation and later said on X the Centre was working closely with the Assam government in providing relief to the affected people.

Sharing Modi’s post on X on reviewing the deluge with Union ministers and BJP MPs from the state, Sarma said, “Adarni-



ya Pradhan Mantri ji, thank you for your personal attention to this matter and taking on-the-ground updates regarding the As-

sam floods.”

“Under your leadership, we are working on a war footing to provide relief to

our people, and so far we have been able to reach every affected village,” the chief minister said.

He said power connectivity has also been restored to a majority of the flood-affected areas and all those rescued are sheltered in relief camps with proper food and medical facilities.

“We will keep working 24/7 to ensure swift response in this hour and thereafter present a comprehensive rehabilitation roadmap to assist our people, which shall be rooted in the principles of Jan Bhagidari (people’s participation),”

Sarma said, thanking the PM for “closely monitoring the situation and offering all assistance to us.”

The prime minister had called up Sarma on Saturday to enquire about the prevailing situation and offered full support to the Assam government in dealing with the ongoing flood havoc.

Indian Air Force Concludes Six-Day Flood Relief Mission

Kohima, July 29: The Indian Air Force finished a six-day humanitarian mission in Nagaland on Tuesday. Pilots hauled 6.85 metric tonnes of relief supplies into flood-ravaged zones. They also flew 64 stranded people to safety. Two helicopters ran the operation.

The crews delivered 3.30 metric tonnes to Namsang and 3.55 metric tonnes to Tamlu. Once supplies were offloaded, the helicopters began evacuations. They pulled 22 people from Tamlu in the first sortie. Another 19 followed. The final flight cleared 23 people from Longleng, including a child. The passengers included students and patients. The final mission stretched past 5 p.m. due to operational constraints. Personnel stayed overnight in Dimapur before returning to base. The Nagaland State Disaster Management Au-

thority thanked the air crews for their work. “Its support significantly strengthened the state’s disaster response efforts and provided timely relief to affected communities,” the government stated. The operation proceeded despite bad weather and rugged terrain. State officials are now tightening control over aid distribution. The Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority ordered all NGOs, church groups, and individuals to route cash or physical goods through District Disaster Management Authorities. This directive covers all 17 districts. Secretary Sentiwapang Aier said the move prevents aid duplication. It ensures help reaches every village fairly. The authority provided a list of contact numbers for Additional Deputy Commissioners across all 17 districts to manage the flow of supplies.

Shillong Peak ropeway complies with all environmental, safeguards: MRDA

Shillong, July 29: The Meghalaya government on Tuesday said that the proposed Shillong Peak Ropeway Cable Car project is being implemented with full statutory approvals and strict environmental and community safeguards, following concerns raised by a group of citizens, mostly led by women. In a statement, the Joint Chief Executive Officer of Meghalaya Ropeway Development Authority (MRDA) reiterated government’s commitment to balancing development with environmental conservation. The MRDA assured that the government will continue to engage with stakeholders in a transparent and responsible manner throughout the implementation of the project. “Protecting Meghalaya’s natural heritage while creating sustainable opportunities for its people continues to remain a guiding principle of the government’s tourism development strategy,” the MRDA assured. On Monday, a group of citizens, mostly women, visited the ropeway site at Riat Laban and expressed their resentment over the destruction of the area after seeing trees being felled to facilitate the project. The

residents feared that the ropeway project would affect local drinking water sources and cause severe environmental damage from large-scale tree felling. However, the MRDA said that the project has been taken up only after obtaining all permissions relating to environmental safeguards, following national laws and international best practices.

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has approved the diversion of 2.3257 hectares of forest land to the Forest Department for Compensatory Tree Plantation in compliance with the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 for diversion of forest land. Permission to fell 544 trees was also obtained after they were duly marked for the Rs. 151 crore Shillong Peak Ropeway Cable Car project which is funded by the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Union Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) under the Prime Minister’s Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) Scheme. Out of the Rs. 151 crores, the NDB is funding

Rs. 80.89 crore and the remaining Rs. 70.11 Crore by the DoNER ministry, the MRDA said, adding that the construction work began on October 15, 2025, following National and International Safeguard Standards (Environment & Social). The project has also received no-objection certificates from the Airports Authority of India, the Indian Air Force, and the Indian Army. The Shillong Peak Ropeway Cable Car will be 896 m long and will have lower and upper terminal points, 13 cabins and has been designed as per CEN (European) standards. “The project will not only improve tourists’ commuting experience, but will also contribute to increased employment and livelihood opportunities for the local community,” the MRDA said. Moreover, they said the project will also result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) through the replacement of road travel by the ropeway. The project has been developed by the Tourism Department in partnership with the Rait Laban Dorbar Pyllun, which has agreed to lease the land for the project.

Border trade via Nathu La to resume on Aug 1

Gangtok, July 29: Border trade between India and China through the Nathu La Pass in Sikkim will resume on August 1, after a six-year hiatus since the COVID-19 pandemic, the state’s Commerce and Industries Department officials said on Tuesday. The reopening is expected to revive economic activities and restore a crucial source of livelihood for registered traders and border communities that have been affected by the prolonged closure since 2020. The Nathu La trade route has long served as an important economic link, facilitating the exchange of notified goods between registered traders from both countries. “A formal programme will be held at Nathula on August 1 to mark the resumption of trading activities after the six-year gap,” an official said, adding that officials from both India and China will at-



tend the event. “The reopening of border trade through Nathu La is a significant development for Sikkim. It will help revive economic activities, benefit registered traders, and strengthen traditional cross-border trade through this historic route,” another official said. Border trade through the historic Old Silk Route at Nathu La had formally been reopened on July 6, 2006, after a gap of 44 years, raising high hopes of strengthening bilateral ties. The trade route was officially operational for approximately six months each year, from May to November.

Grants Re-evaluation Path for 367 Students

Kohima, July 29: Nagaland University agreed to let 367 students challenge their Four-Year Undergraduate Programme results. The school backtracked on strict rules after pressure from the All Nagaland College Students’ Union. These students previously hit a wall because they scored single digits or failed to reach the mandatory 20 percent mark for re-evaluation.

The deal followed an July 27 meeting between union leaders and university officials. It stems from a formal appeal filed on July 22, 2026. Students now have a path forward. The union will hand a consolidated list of

these names to the school to start the process. Once the university processes that list, every affected student gets to look at their original answer scripts. University policy on this specific group is changing. “In the event that a student is not satisfied with the tabulation or award of marks after verification of the answer script, he or she shall be allowed to apply for re-evaluation, notwithstanding the existing eligibility criterion,” the official resolution states. Affected students must act fast. You have two days to report your Secretary Imnawabang T Lkr. You can reach his office at 8794280962.

In Parliament, Rahul Gandhi attacks Amit Shah and the RSS, and the Center demands an apology

New Delhi, July 29: Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi’s use of a “unparliamentary” phrase during the discussion of the new law to stop paper leaks caused chaos in the Lok Sabha and a strong pushback from the Treasury benches. Gandhi distinguished between “students and others” as he stood to address the House. Gandhi observed, recalling his discussion with a group of students, that students are those who have an open mind and seek the truth, while those who think they know everything fall into the opposite category. The government side strongly objected to his usage of the term “unparliamentary” to characterize the second group of individuals. After Gandhi repeatedly used the “word”, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju interjected and demanded that he stop using the “word”. He was joined by NDA MPs in protesting against Gandhi’s use of the term. Responding to the BJP objection, Gandhi maintained that he was not using the expression against any member of the House, but the treasury benches continued their protest. Gandhi was asked to refrain from using the



“word” by Rajnath Singh, the minister of defense. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla later removed the statement from the proceedings. Gandhi continued by accusing the RSS of “destroying” the Indian educational system. “Gandhi said, “The RSS people are not letting students seek knowledge and truth and are forcing them to study their own version of history that they fantasize.” “RSS runs the education ministry, not the minister.” Dharmendra Pradhan is merely an emblem. Gandhi declared, “RSS is our students’ true enemy. Gandhi also attacked

Home Minister Amit Shah over the crackdown on students during the July 20 protest. Alleging that Shah “ordered” the attacks on students, Gandhi said: “The Home Minister now doesn’t have the courage to face Parliament and speak on the assault of students.” Gandhi’s remarks about Shah were criticized by Rijiju once more, and he was asked to refrain from making “allegations” against the Home Minister. Gandhi had to issue an apology to Rijiju for his accusations against Shah. Rijiju questioned Gandhi, “Where is the proof that Amit Shah ordered the attack on students?” Wild accusations cannot be made by the Leader of the Opposition. “He ought to retract his remarks and offer an apology,” Rijiju stated. Rahul Gandhi retaliated by saying that “only the Home Minister can authorise the brutal use of force on students.” This statement sparked intense protests from Treasury benches and calls for an apology. The speaker also reminded Rahul Gandhi once more that accusations against a minister cannot be supported by any documentation.

41 locations in Tamil Nadu connected to an ex-minister are raided by vigilance officials



New Delhi, July 29: In relation to an alleged case of misappropriation and malpractice by Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC), the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) searched 41 locations in Tamil Nadu on Tuesday. Both Senthilbalaji’s home in Karur and the locations of his acquaintances were searched. Senthilbalaji was also questioned by DVAC officers while he was staying at a luxury hotel in Chennai. The searches

take place in response to a complaint filed by the DVAC regarding suspected irregularities against former Tamil Nadu Minister and DMK MLA V Senthilbalaji, a former TASMAC Managing Director, and many TASMAC staff. Senthilbalaji had served as the Minister for Prohibition and Excise in the previous DMK government, overseeing the state-run liquor retailer TASMAC. Investigators claimed that Golden Vats Pvt. Ltd., a Tiruvavur-based liquor manufacturing company connected to DMK MP TR Baalu, was also searched by the agency. Chennai, Pudukkottai, Tiruvavur, Karur, Thanjavur, Coimbatore, Namakkal, Tiruppur, Erode, The Nilgiris (Ooty), Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Villupuram, and Sivaganga were the locations of the searches. Senthilbalaji has been accused of TASMAC irregularities on multiple occasions by the ruling TVK. Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay had previously referred to the purported anomalies as a “party fund.” Every accusation has been refuted by the DMK.

A 20-year-old IIT Bombay student was discovered dead in his dorm room

New Delhi, July 29: According to authorities, a 20-year-old second-year student at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay was discovered dead in his Powai campus hostel room on Tuesday night. The police claim that after the student failed to open his door on Tuesday night, they obtained information about the incident. After several attempts to get in touch with him were unsuccessful, hostel security officers notified the institute administration. In accordance with section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, the police notified his parents in Rajasthan and filed an accidental death report. Police stated that no suicide note was discovered in the room and that an investigation is being conducted to determine the precise cause of the death. His parents called again at 10.30 p.m., but no one answered. This led



them to contact the IIT security personnel, who went to his room and discovered it locked from the inside, according to a police officer from the Powai police station. The student may have passed away between 5 and 10.30 p.m., according to police speculation. Students on campus reported hearing that the deceased appeared depressed and may have taken the drastic measure as a result of a failed relationship. An officer stated, “The team is investigating every possibility to ascertain the reason behind the drastic

action. Students questioned administrators and voiced worries about responsibility, pointing out that despite the institute’s efforts to increase mental health care, this was the second such occurrence recorded on the IIT Bombay campus this year. In February, another second-year IIT Bombay student allegedly died by suicide. The institute emphasized the counseling and mental health services offered on campus once more after that occurrence. Students were urged to seek assistance if they were experiencing

stress or emotional challenges, and they were made aware of one-on-one counseling sessions and other support systems. IIT Bombay and the IIT Council implemented a number of initiatives to enhance student wellness following the death of a student in February 2023. The organization educated senior students to serve as peer mentors and mandated wellness sessions for first-year undergraduates. Additionally, the college began offering regular wellness programs, such as yoga, meditation, counseling, and community wellbeing initiatives. Additionally, courses were altered to facilitate incoming students’ adjustment to IIT life. Nonetheless, there are still reports of student suicides at IITs all around the nation. Between 2021 and 2025, 65 students at IITs committed suicide, according to data gathered under the Right to Information Act.

After ten days of flooding, Gutung in Bokakhat is still under water



New Delhi, July 29: For the past ten days, flooding have kept the Gutung area under Mahuramukh in Bokakhat co-district underwater. A mourning family was compelled to transport their teenage son’s body by hand canoe for about three kilometers in order to perform his final rites amid the current flood disaster. The 15-year-old Hariprasad Loing, the older son of Gutung village’s Abhijit and Bichitra Loing, unexpectedly died on Sunday at the Jorhat Medical College & Hospital. Hariprasad was first hospitalized to Shaheed Kamala Miri Civil Hospital in Bokakhat

following the onset of a fever. Doctors recommended that he receive intensive therapy at Jorhat Medical College as his condition deteriorated. But physicians pronounced him dead soon after he arrived at the hospital. The entire hamlet was still under floodwaters when the family returned home with his body, so they had nowhere dry to conduct the burial. The funeral rites were performed on an elevated area of land after the body was eventually conveyed by hand-operated boat for approximately three kilometers with the assistance of the local residents.

111 roads in Uttarakhand are closed, and the Hemkund Sahib Yatra has been halted



New Delhi, July 29: The Char Dham Yatra and Hemkund Sahib Yatra have been temporarily suspended by the authorities due to heavy rainfall in Uttarakhand. 111 highways throughout the state have been blocked by landslides, debris, and falling boulders. On July 29, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an Orange signal for severe to extremely heavy rainfall in eight Uttarakhand districts. When the weather improves and the roads are deemed safe, the yatra will resume, according to officials. Additionally, an Orange notice has been issued by the weather service for July 30. The districts of Bageshwar, Nainital, Champawat, and Pithoragarh are anticipated to see significant rainfall. Additionally, Uttarkashi, Dehradun, Pauri, Tehri, and Nainital are under a yellow warning. 111 routes, including three National Highways and six State Highways, are still closed as a result

of landslides and debris, according to official data. Rural roads make up the majority of the obstructed routes. Additionally, rehabilitation work is in progress on 24 Public Works Department (PWD) routes that have been closed. In terms of districts, there are two closed roads in Almora, eight in Bageshwar, twelve in Chamoli, six in Pauri, sixteen in Pithoragarh (including one National Highway and one Border Roads route), five in Rudrapur, seventeen in Tehri, and eleven in Uttarkashi. In Nainital, a number of highways are also closed, including a district route. Official data shows that Maldevta (Dehradun) had the most rainfall (233 mm), followed by Dehradun city (194.5 mm), Jolly Grant (172.2 mm), and Mussoorie (163 mm). Significant rainfall was also recorded in Ukhimath (120 mm), Didihat (102 mm), Mohammadpur (95.8 mm), Dhanaulti (88 mm), Haldwani (83 mm), Thal (83 mm), and Chamoli (80.6 mm). Additionally,

Tejam (73 mm), Berinag (72 mm), Kirtinagar (70 mm), Narendra Nagar (63 mm), Rishikesh (61.4 mm), and Uttarkashi headquarters (61 mm) reported heavy rains. Jakholi (58 mm), Sitarganj (57 mm), Bhatwari (55 mm), Kanalicchhina (53.3 mm), Kapkot (53 mm), Joshimath (51 mm), Devalthal (50 mm), and Bageshwar (50 mm) are among the other places that had significant rainfall. Rainfall totaled 42 mm in Bangapani, 40 mm each in Salt and Kichha. During the same time period, Devprayag received 38.4 mm while Dharchula recorded 38.8 mm. Several rivers now have higher water levels as a result of the intense rains. The Mandakini and Alaknanda rivers are rushing near the danger line at Rudrapur. Until conditions improve, officials have recommended residents to stay away from landslide-prone routes, obey weather advisories, and avoid needless travel in steep areas.

A Delhi civic body has ordered the closure of illegal meat shops along the Kanwar Yatra routes

New Delhi, July 29: As the yearly pilgrimage is scheduled to start later this week, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has instructed its twelve zones to close all unlicensed meat stores and take action against licensed establishments found to be in violation of permit restrictions along Kanwar Yatra routes and close to Kanwar camps. Additionally, the civic authority has requested that officials finish all civic preparations before the yatra, which is set to take place in the nation’s capital from July 30 to August 11 in 308 Kanwar camps. According to civic officials, all zonal deputy commissioners have been instructed in an office



memo issued on Monday to make sure that encroachments at designated Kanwar camp sites are cleared before the pilgrimage begins. The memorandum said MCD had been assigned the responsibility of clearing encroachments from camp sites well in advance of the yatra. Zonal authorities have already been provided

details of the identified locations, while additional camps may also be permitted, if required. The city authority has instructed officials to make sure that no unlicensed or unapproved meat shops operate near Kanwar camps or along the yatra routes. Additionally, it stated that licensed meat stores that are found to be

A Manipur Naga group claims commando action and announces closure following a gunfight

New Delhi, July 29: In protest over a purported commando action on village volunteers in Bitiang in the ethnic violence-affected state’s Noney district, a Naga body on Wednesday called for the shutdown and closure of highways, railways, and national projects throughout Manipur’s Naga-inhabited districts. During a search operation in Bitiang on Wednesday, security personnel and Naga volunteers engaged with gunfire, according to officials. Locals claimed that a commando unit of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) conducted an operation at a training camp for the Naga Village Guard (NVG). According to people aware with the situation, at least two CRPF soldiers and an unknown number of NGV were hurt. Officials said additional security forces, including Rapid Action Force and state police, have been deployed to control the situation. The Working Committee of the Joint Tribes Council-Manipur announced the

shutdown across Naga-inhabited areas, alleging the operation targeted their volunteers and amounted to a betrayal of Naga lives. It accused the CRPF’s commando unit of an “unprovoked and cowardly attack” and alleged collusion with a Naga insurgent outfit, Zeliangrong United Front-Jenchui. The committee linked the incident to the killing of six Nagas. It accused the authorities of failing to bring those responsible to justice while launching an operation against Naga volunteers. The committee called Wednesday’s operation a “blatant act of state-sponsored terrorism”. It alleged that “the real terrorists, the narcotic-peddling, men-eater Kuki militants” are roaming freely with impunity. According to the committee, vital services including hospitals, schools, colleges, telecommunications, and power will not be affected by the shutdown. It further stated that the shutdown would last until the Union government took “decisive and meaning-



ful action” to apprehend those accountable for the Naga deaths, stopped what it described as aggressive actions against Naga villages, and restored justice. Kuki-Zo groups began an extended counter-economic blockade on Monday on the route that connects the state affected by ethnic conflict with neighboring Nagaland. They claim that the blockade would go on until the government guarantees the free flow of necessities to their communities. An economic blockade against Kuki-Zos was stepped up by Naga and Meitei groups protesting the murders of six Naga hostages last month.

A man suffocates to death after being buried in a pit during a botched circus stunt

Gurugram, July 29: According to police on Wednesday, a 27-year-old member of a traditional rural circus group died purportedly from suffocation after a routine performance in which he would emerge after being buried alive in a sack for three days went awry in Haryana’s Nuh district. When his colleagues attempted to rescue Deepak, a resident of Gaunchi village in Faridabad, from the pit where he had been lowered and buried with a mound of dirt during a “live Samadhi” act—a performance that is common in these rural areas—he remained unresponsive. Deepak entered the pit on July 23 and suffocated to death, according to the inquiry. He was taken to the hospital, where medical professionals pronounced him dead, according to a senior police official, who also stated that more research is being done to determine what caused his death.

The authorities claim that Deepak has been performing for around 15 years, and his family is made up of traditional performers who travel from village to village. In Khorihamlet in the Tauru region of Nuh district, they had set up camp on an empty plot. Deepak entertained the audience with a series of bike exploits prior to the burial act. In his “live Samadhi” conclusion, Deepak was put in a sack, lowered into a trench that had been carefully dug, and covered with piles of dirt.

North East Chronicle

JULY 30 2026 VOL 02 NO. 156



Infantino’s Online Persona and the Future of Governance

Fifa president Gianni Infantino has increasingly become a symbol of a new era in sports leadership, where administrators are no longer confined to managing institutions but also seek to become the public face of the organisations they lead. His recent 15-page Instagram statement defending the World Cup and responding to criticism reflects a broader transformation in the way powerful figures communicate. Infantino’s message was not simply a defence of Fifa’s work; it was a personal declaration of purpose, presenting himself as a leader battling critics while portraying football as a force for unity and global connection. The episode highlights how modern executives and public figures have embraced constant online visibility, often blurring the boundaries between leadership, promotion, and personal branding.

In his lengthy social media post, Infantino criticised those who questioned Fifa’s decisions and claimed that critics had missed the joy and togetherness created by the tournament. He presented Fifa officials as people working on the “front-lines” to deliver a global spectacle while accusing opponents of spreading negativity. The tone reflected a growing tendency among prominent leaders to respond directly to criticism through social media rather than traditional communication channels. Instead of allowing institutions to speak through formal statements, many leaders now use personal platforms to shape narratives, defend reputations, and engage with audiences without intermediaries.

Infantino’s approach has attracted criticism because it reinforces the perception that he sees himself as inseparable from Fifa itself. Under his leadership, the organisation has increasingly revolved around his personal image, public appearances, and direct communication with supporters. His defenders argue that a global organisation requires a visible leader capable of promoting its mission and defending its achievements. Critics, however, suggest that excessive personalisation of power can weaken institutional accountability by making the individual leader appear larger than the organisation they represent.

This phenomenon is not limited to football. Across industries, business leaders, entrepreneurs, and public figures have embraced the idea that visibility is essential for success. Social media has transformed leadership into a performance where executives are expected not only to make decisions but also to constantly explain their thoughts, values, and personalities online. What was once considered op-

tional self-promotion has become an important part of professional identity. Leaders are increasingly expected to act as content creators, maintaining a permanent digital presence to attract attention, influence opinion, and strengthen their personal brands.

The rise of the “always-online” leader creates new opportunities but also new challenges. Direct communication allows executives to connect with audiences more quickly and build stronger relationships with supporters. However, it also encourages impulsive reactions, personal controversies, and the prioritisation of image over substance. The pressure to remain visible can sometimes distract leaders from the less glamorous responsibilities of administration, governance, and long-term planning. In the digital age, appearing active can become confused with being effective.

Sports organisations have been particularly affected by this shift because modern competitions are no longer viewed only as sporting events. Major tournaments have become global entertainment platforms involving media rights, sponsorships, digital content, commercial partnerships, and political influence. Matches are only one part of a much larger ecosystem of branding and engagement. Behind-the-scenes content, social media campaigns, and viral moments have become central to how sports bodies maintain relevance and generate revenue.

Infantino’s leadership style reflects this changing environment. He has often positioned himself as a defender of football’s global reach and a champion of expanding the sport’s influence. His supporters argue that he has helped increase Fifa’s commercial power and broaden football’s appeal across continents. However, critics remain concerned about governance, transparency, and the concentration of authority within the organisation. Questions surrounding Fifa’s relationship with political leaders and decisions made under Infantino’s tenure have contributed to continued scrutiny.

The controversy surrounding his online statements also reveals a larger cultural shift. Public figures increasingly adopt the language of personal struggle, presenting criticism as hostility and themselves as individuals fighting against unfair attacks. This style of communication can create strong loyalty among supporters but may also discourage meaningful criticism. When leaders portray all disagreement as negativity or misinformation, institutions risk losing the constructive debate necessary for accountability.

The End of Easy Opposition Politics as Labour Presents a Clearer Alternative

The emergence of Andy Burnham as a Labour prime minister has created a sense of uncertainty and discomfort within Britain’s political right. After a period in which the Conservative Party and Reform UK benefited from the weaknesses and unpopularity of Keir Starmer’s government, the arrival of a leader with a clearer political vision has exposed the lack of a convincing alternative from the opposition. The British right, which had grown accustomed to criticising Labour’s failures rather than confronting its ideas, now faces the more difficult task of responding to a government attempting to reshape debates around economic management, regional inequality, and the role of the state. The challenge for Conservatives is not simply defeating Burnham’s arguments but understanding them, because dismissing them as a return to 1970s socialism risks revealing an absence of serious policy thinking.

Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch’s repeated references to the economic and social turmoil of the 1970s illustrate the difficulty faced by the modern British right in defining its response to Labour’s agenda. In a recent speech, Badenoch warned against a return to an era associated with industrial unrest, public service failures, inflation, and economic instability. However, these arguments appear less like a detailed critique of current policy and more like a political ritual rooted in historical memory. For many Conservatives, the 1970s remain a powerful symbol of everything the party believes it overcame through the reforms of Margaret Thatcher’s era.

Yet relying too heavily on memories of past battles may not provide answers to present-day challenges.

The difficulty for the Conservatives is that Burnham’s political project does not simply seek to revive the economic model of the 1970s. His argument is more nuanced. He has criticised certain consequences of the Thatcher era, particularly the centralisation of political power, the privatisation of economic assets, and the decline of industrial communities that have struggled to recover. However, his approach does not represent a rejection of markets or private enterprise. His years as mayor of Manchester provide evidence of a different vision—one based on cooperation between government and business, regional empowerment, and strategic intervention by the state.

Manchester’s transformation under Burnham has become central to his argument about the future of Britain. He presents the city as an example of how public institutions and private businesses can work together to create economic growth. Rather than advocating state control of the economy, he argues for a more active and decentralised state capable of supporting investment, addressing regional inequalities, and responding to local needs. This approach challenges the traditional Conservative assumption that any expansion of state involvement automatically represents a move toward socialism. In reality, many modern economies combine market competition with strategic government intervention.

The response from the

right has revealed an ideological struggle over how Britain should understand its economic problems. Some Conservatives and Reform supporters portray Burnham’s ideas as a dangerous return to state intervention and anti-business politics. However, critics argue that such an interpretation ignores the complexity of contemporary governance. The question is not whether markets or governments should dominate completely, but how both can work effectively together. Many of Britain’s current difficulties—including regional inequality, weak productivity growth, strained public services, and infrastructure challenges—cannot be addressed through ideology alone.

Nigel Farage and Reform UK have also struggled to define their position in response to Burnham’s rise. Their criticism that the prime minister lacks a mandate appears politically convenient but does not fully engage with the realities of Britain’s parliamentary system. Reform UK has gained support by presenting itself as an alternative to the established parties, particularly by exploiting dissatisfaction with Conservative leadership. However, the emergence of a Labour government with a clearer agenda creates a challenge for Reform as well. Opposition politics requires more than expressing frustration; it requires demonstrating how power would be exercised differently.

The Conservative Party’s difficulties are particularly visible because it spent much of the previous period benefiting from Labour’s internal struggles rather than developing a

strong governing alternative. Keir Starmer’s leadership faced criticism over unclear priorities, communication problems, and declining public support. This allowed Conservative and Reform politicians to focus on Labour’s weaknesses rather than articulate their own vision for the country. However, Burnham’s more confident approach has changed the political environment. The opposition can no longer rely solely on attacking Labour’s failures; it must present credible solutions to national problems.

Badenoch’s leadership has struggled to overcome this challenge. Her early focus on arguing that the Conservatives had become too moderate while in government appeared to strengthen Reform UK’s argument that dissatisfied voters should move further right. Later, she shifted toward fiscal conservatism, attempting to position the Conservatives between Labour’s spending priorities and Reform’s populist appeal. Yet criticism remains that the party lacks a broader theory of how to reform public services, improve economic performance, and rebuild trust with voters.

One weakness identified by critics is that Conservative analysis of Britain’s problems often appears overly ideological. Many public frustrations do not arise simply from excessive spending or ideological influence within institutions. Citizens frequently complain about declining service quality, housing shortages, regional inequality, healthcare pressures, and economic insecurity. Addressing these concerns requires detailed policy proposals rather than broad

ideological accusations. A successful opposition must explain not only what it opposes but also what it intends to build.

The influence of American conservative politics has added another layer of complexity to the British right’s identity. Political movements in Britain have always been influenced by developments abroad, but the increasing influence of American-style cultural battles has created tensions over whether British conservatism is developing solutions suited to domestic realities. Critics argue that excessive focus on imported ideological conflicts risks distracting from practical issues affecting British citizens. Political parties succeed when they adapt ideas to national circumstances rather than simply adopting foreign political trends.

At the same time, the Conservative Party cannot ignore the concerns that have driven support toward Reform UK. Many voters feel disconnected from traditional institutions and frustrated by slow economic progress, immigration pressures, and declining confidence in public services. Any attempt to rebuild Conservative support must address these concerns seriously. However, doing so requires more than adopting increasingly aggressive rhetoric. It requires a coherent programme capable of convincing voters that the party understands their problems and has realistic plans to solve them.

Burnham’s political advantage lies partly in his ability to connect economic arguments with questions of identity and community. His criticism of the long-term effects of industrial decline resonates with voters who feel left be-

hind by national economic changes. His emphasis on devolution and local decision-making also reflects a broader desire for communities to have greater control over their futures. Whether this approach succeeds nationally remains uncertain, but it provides a political narrative that goes beyond simple opposition to Conservative policies.

The emergence of a more confident Labour government therefore presents a strategic challenge for Britain’s right. Historical warnings about the 1970s may still have emotional appeal among Conservative supporters, but they are unlikely to be sufficient as a long-term political strategy. Voters facing modern challenges require answers relevant to the present rather than reminders of past ideological conflicts. The Conservatives must decide whether they want to define themselves primarily through opposition to Labour or through a positive vision for Britain’s future.

Ultimately, the current discomfort within the British right reflects a deeper political transition. The easy period of benefiting from Labour’s mistakes has ended. A government with clearer ideas forces opposition parties to engage seriously with policy debates. Burnham’s approach may or may not succeed, but it has already changed the nature of political competition by requiring opponents to offer more than criticism. The future of the Conservative Party will depend on whether it can move beyond nostalgia, develop practical solutions, and reconnect with voters who are looking for competence rather than ideological certainty.

Queer Community Demands More Than Condolences After Attack Reveals Political Contradictions

The violent attack on Berlin Pride has triggered a familiar wave of political responses across Germany. Flowers have been offered, statements of sympathy have been issued, and politicians have declared that an assault on the queer community is an attack on the entire society. Such expressions of solidarity are expected after an act of violence, especially one targeting a vulnerable minority group. However, for many members of the LGBTQ+ community, these words have raised uncomfortable questions about whether political leaders genuinely stand with them or are simply responding to public pressure. The gap between symbolic support and actual policy commitments has become a central issue in the debate following the attack.

The incident, in which a vehicle was driven into a Pride gathering in Berlin, was not merely an attack on an abstract idea of social harmony. It was an attack on queer people who had gathered to celebrate their identities openly and safely. Pride events exist because LGBTQ+ communities have historically faced discrimination, exclusion, and violence. The visibility associated with these gatherings is both an expression of freedom and a reminder of the struggles that made such visibility possible. Treating the attack only as an assault on “everyone” risks removing the specific experiences of the community that was directly targeted.

Many queer activists argue that political leaders are too quick to express sympathy after attacks while ignoring policies that affect LGBTQ+ people in everyday life. Public statements of unity often receive significant attention, but long-term protection depends on concrete actions, including funding for sup-

port organisations, protection against discrimination, inclusive education, and policies that safeguard vulnerable groups. Without these measures, expressions of solidarity can appear performative rather than meaningful.

The criticism has particularly focused on Germany’s conservative leadership. Chancellor Friedrich Merz and other members of the centre-right government have condemned the violence and emphasised the importance of defending diversity and democratic values. However, critics point to previous decisions and statements by conservative politicians that they believe have weakened support for LGBTQ+ communities. This contrast between public condemnation of violence and earlier political choices has created accusations of inconsistency.

One example frequently discussed by activists is Merz’s previous opposition to displaying a rainbow flag at the Bundestag during Pride celebrations. His reported argument that the parliament should not become a “circus tent” was interpreted by some members of the queer community as dismissive of LGBTQ+ visibility. Therefore, when the same political figures later emphasise that Pride represents democratic values, critics question whether their support extends beyond moments of crisis.

Similar concerns have been raised regarding policies related to diversity and inclusion. Critics argue that reducing funding for diversity programmes, limiting inclusive language initiatives, or weakening institutional support systems sends a contradictory message. They contend that defending a community after an attack requires more than condemning violence; it requires creating social and political conditions where

that community feels protected and valued every day.

The question of security has also become central following the attack. Governments often respond to acts of violence by increasing policing and expanding security measures. While many citizens understandably seek stronger protection after such incidents, some activists caution against relying solely on increased surveillance or police presence. They argue that security should also include social support systems, community organisations, and preventive measures that address the conditions allowing hatred and extremism to spread.

Queer organisations play a crucial role in providing such support. Community groups often operate crisis helplines, offer counselling services, assist young people facing discrimination, and provide safe spaces for individuals who may feel isolated. However, many of these organisations face financial difficulties due to budget cuts and reduced government support. Activists argue that strengthening these networks would provide more meaningful protection than symbolic political statements after tragedies occur.

The debate has also intersected with discussions on immigration and extremism. Authorities have identified Islamist extremism as a factor in the Berlin attack, highlighting a genuine security challenge faced by Germany and other European countries. Ignoring extremist threats would be irresponsible, particularly when such ideologies have targeted LGBTQ+ communities in various parts of the world. However, activists warn against using individual acts of extremism as justification for broad measures that unfairly tar-

get entire communities or increase discrimination against migrants and refugees.

The relationship between LGBTQ+ rights and migration debates is complex. Many queer individuals seek asylum because they face persecution due to their sexual orientation or gender identity in their home countries. Restrictive migration policies can therefore directly affect vulnerable people escaping violence and discrimination. A balanced approach requires addressing security threats while ensuring that human rights protections remain central.

The Berlin Pride attack has exposed a broader challenge facing democratic societies: the difference between defending values in words and defending them through action. Political leaders often speak of diversity, equality, and freedom, but these principles require sustained commitment beyond moments of tragedy. Communities facing discrimination judge governments not only by their statements after attacks but also by the policies implemented before and after them. For the queer community, the most urgent concern is not simply political messaging but practical protection. This includes ensuring access to support services, maintaining safe spaces, strengthening anti-discrimination measures, and recognising the specific nature of attacks against LGBTQ+ people. Solidarity must involve listening to affected communities rather than speaking over them.

At the same time, democratic societies must confront extremist ideologies without allowing fear to weaken commitments to equality and human rights. The challenge for governments is to protect citizens while

ensuring that security measures do not create new forms of exclusion. A society’s commitment to freedom is tested not only by how it responds to threats but also by how it treats minorities during periods of uncertainty.

The aftermath of the Berlin Pride attack therefore presents an opportunity for Germany to examine whether its commitment to equality is reflected in its policies and institutions. Condemnation of violence is necessary, but it is only the first step. Genuine solidarity requires consistent action, investment in protection, and recognition that defending a minority community means addressing the challenges it faces every day—not only when tragedy captures public attention. The debate following the Berlin Pride attack also highlights the importance of preserving public spaces where minority communities can express themselves without fear. Pride celebrations are not only cultural events but also symbols of equal citizenship and social acceptance. When such spaces come under threat, the response cannot be limited to security arrangements alone; it must involve a broader commitment to combating prejudice and protecting democratic freedoms. Governments, civil society organisations, and communities must work together to ensure that hatred does not succeed in silencing vulnerable groups. The real measure of solidarity lies not in statements made after violence occurs, but in the everyday choices that determine whether minorities feel safe, respected, and included. Germany’s response to this tragedy will therefore be judged by whether it transforms grief into lasting reforms and meaningful protection for the queer community.

Phoenix Mills Shares Fall After Q1 Earnings Miss



NewDelhi: Afterthe business released its June quarter results, shares of Mumbai-based real estate developer Phoenix Mills fell more than 6% during intraday trading on Wednesday. The company recorded a 23% year-over-year increase in net profit at ₹393.55 crore for the quarter that concluded on June 30, 2026. During the same quarter in FY26, it made ₹319.92 crore in profit. READ MORE Compared to ₹952.99 crore recorded in the June quarter of the previous fiscal year, its revenue increased 12.8% year over year to ₹1,074.94 crore. In the reporting three-month period, Ebitda increased by 13.83% year over year to ₹642 crore from ₹564 crore in the same period last yearSequentially, Phoenix Mills’ earnings decreased 18.98 percent from ₹485FY26.

Will Bitcoin make a comeback or stay rangeboundTechcal perspective provides

New Delhi: As of June 15, Bitcoin was still trading about 48% below the all-time high of \$126,198 on October 6, 2025—a decline characterized by persistent lower highs, waning ETF demand, and abrupt liquidation events—but had recovered into the \$65,000–\$66,000 range following U.S.-Iran peace-framework headlines that improved risk appetite. Bitcoin experienced a significant recovery earlier in the month from the 200-week moving average, which was close to \$61,000. Before beginning an upward trend, Bitcoin typically goes through a consolidation phase lasting three to six months. In the near future, we anticipate a consolidation of Bitcoin. After rising from \$60,000, Bitcoin created a double-bottom pattern during the first week of June. For the first time since late 2024, Bitcoin momentarily surpassed \$60,000 as a result of cascading liquidations totaling almost \$1.75 billion across leveraged futures positions. Both of the important daily moving averages are still below Bitcoin. BTC is currently trading close to \$65,700 on the 1D chart, with the 50-day and 200-day moving averages at roughly \$73,667



and \$77,521, respectively. This indicates that despite the recent respite rally, the larger daily trend is still under pressure. The first significant trend-repair indication would be a re-take of the 50-DMA, and a stronger medium-term recovery would require a move over the 200-DMA. The important floor on the downside is \$60,000. As authorized participants reduce or increase their exposure to Bitcoin in response to creations and redemptions, ETF flows have emerged as one of the most obvious indicators of institutional demand for the cryptocurrency. Over a nine-day period in April alone, spot Bitcoin ETFs took in over 19,000 BTC. The effective float

decreases and even small demand causes price changes that are excessive when institutional purchasers consume nine times the entire new supply mined during the same period. May was a whole other story. From May 15 to June 3, Spot Bitcoin ETFs experienced a 13-day outflow of \$4.33 billion, the longest since their introduction in 2024. From \$104 billion to about \$80 billion, the total assets under control decreased. A little \$3.05 million inflow stopped the 13-day BTC ETF outflow run, then on June 12, a larger \$85.85 million BTC ETF inflow led by BlackRock IBIT took place. Inflows are still lower than during the previous multibillion-dollar bleed, but selling pressure has lessened.

J&J’s \$5.5 Billion Talc Settlement Under Scrutiny



NewDelhi: In order to resolve around 76,000 lawsuits claiming that their talc-based baby powder caused ovarian cancer, Johnson & Johnson has promised to pay \$5.5 billion. Even though the payoff is one of the greatest product liability settlements in recent memory, it is by no means the largest check that Corporate America has ever written. This is how it stacks up against some of the biggest court settlements ever. The latest in a rising series of multibillion-dollar corporate settlements in the US is Johnson & Johnson’s commitment to pay an estimated \$5.5 billion to resolve thousands of cases related to its talc-based baby powder. About 76,000 current claims claiming that long-term use of the company’s talc products caused ovarian cancer are covered by the proposed agreement. J&J claims the deal is intended to finally put an end to more than ten years of litigation, despite the company’s continued denial of the accusations and insistence that its products are safe.Only if at least 95% of eligible claimants consent to join will the settlement take effect. Attorneys for the plaintiffs claim that the overall payout may potentially surpass \$7 billion because payouts are deter-

mined by the quantity of eligible claims rather than a set cap. The business had previously tried to use a contentious bankruptcy strategy using a subsidiary to end the lawsuit. Nevertheless, J&J was forced to return to the negotiation table after US judges rejected those attempts. The Master Settlement Agreement, which was reached by the four largest American tobacco firms, is still the greatest corporate settlement in US historyIn addition to accepting broad restrictions on tobacco marketing and promotion, the corporations agreed to pay 46 US states more than \$206 billion over a 25-year period to cover healthcare costs associated with smoking. By any measure, the payout is huge. However, it remains behind a number of historic instances including environmental catastrophes, emissions fraud, opioids, and defective products, in contrast to some of the largest corporate settlements ever. Johnson & Johnson will pay almost \$3 billion in 2027 under the proposed accord, with the remaining sum due in 2028. Another record-breaking settlement resulted from the drug crisis.Johnson & Johnson and drug distributors McKesson, Cardinal Health, and AmerisourceBergen agreed

to pay approximately \$26 billion to resolve claims brought by US states and municipal governments about their involvement in the opioid crisis. After one of the worst oil disasters in history, the Deepwater Horizon accident, BP agreed a settlement worth roughly \$20 billion. The agreement included compensation for states and local governments impacted by the leak, federal fines, and environmental restoration. After authorities found that Volkswagen had installed software to rig diesel emissions tests, the firm agreed to pay \$14.7 billion. Vehicle buybacks, environmental remediation initiatives, and compensation for hundreds of thousands of American car owners were all made possible by the settlement. Bayer, a German chemical and pharmaceutical corporation, has agreed to pay almost \$11 billion to resolve over 100,000 cases claiming that its Roundup weedkillercaused cancer. In US courts, litigation is still ongoing even though thousands of cases have been settled. After a previous settlement was overturned by the US Supreme Court, Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family reached a revised \$7.4 billion settlement to settle claims related to the

opioid crisis. The Sackler family had to relinquish control of the business as part of the agreement. In order to resolve some 260,000 claims brought by US military veterans who claimed that the company’s faulty earplugs caused hearing loss, manufacturing behemoth 3M agreed to pay \$6 billion. Over a number of years, a combination of cash and business shares will be used to make the distribution. This list now includes J&J’s planned payment, which is among the biggest product liability settlements in recent memory. The eventual payout might surpass \$7 billion, above the initial estimate, if additional claimants choose to sign the deal. Over the past ten years, large corporate settlements have become more frequent as businesses deal with an increase in mass tort litigation and class-action lawsuits. The increase in “nuclear verdicts”—jury awards totaling tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars—is another contributing reason. Many businesses are opting to negotiate multibillion-dollar settlements rather than face the uncertainty of protracted legal fights and possibly considerably higher damages. Although Johnson & Johnson’s \$5.5 billion payout is among the greatest product liability settlements in recent years, it is by no means the largest corporate settlement. Some of the largest corporations in the world have paid hundreds of billions of dollars to settle legal disputes, ranging from BP’s Deepwater Horizon accident and Volkswagen’s Dieselgate scandal to the opioid crisis and the historic settlement reached by the tobacco industryEven for some of the most profitable companies in the world, large-scale litigation may cost billions of dollars, as demonstrated by the most recentJ&J settlement.

India’s Semiconductor Opportunity: Design, Packaging and Fabs

New Delhi: India’s semiconductor push is progressing from project approvals to execution with the implementation of Semicon 2.0. Projects including wafer production, packaging, testing, and chip design have been supported by the India Semiconductor Mission. But this is the hardest part. Large investments, specialized knowledge, trustworthy suppliers, and order-committing clients are all necessary for semiconductor projects. According to industry analysts, their success will depend on fulfilling global criteria for cost, quality, and scale rather than just beginning manufacturing-India has entered a number of semiconductor value chain segments, each of which offers a unique mix of risks and opportunities. Therefore, the most important question is not whether India can produce chips, but rather where it can compete internationally in the semiconductor value chain. Semiconductor manufacturing cannot rely on independent factories, in contrast to many other industrial sectors.Research, chip architecture, and design are the first steps in the

value chain. IP, electronic design automation software, specialized tools and supplies, wafer production, packaging, testing, and, lastly, electronic goods are all included. The industry as a whole may become less competitive if there is a weakness at any point. According to Sarthak Sarin, a partner at Khaitan & Co., the government’s approach has changed gradually. The goals of ISM 1.0 were to build manufacturing capacity and draw in investment. Instead of focusing solely on individual initiatives, Semicon 2.0 aims to boost the larger ecosystem. “While fabrication remains important for supply chain resilience, the larger opportunity lies in ensuring that investments across different segments complement one another and create an integrated ecosystem,” stated Hitesh Bhardwaj, general manager, semiconductors and devices, Mitsubishi Electric India. Industry analysts concur that India can become a globally competitive competitor without controlling every step of the semiconductor value chain. Rather, the nation’s greatest prospects are found in sectors

where it can develop long-term advantages or where it already has established strengths. Intellectual property (IP) and chip design are two such fields. “India is home to nearly one-fifth of the world’s integrated circuit (IC) design professionals and hosts major engineering and design centres for leading global semiconductor companies,” added Sarin. According to experts, the nation is well-positioned to transition from offering design services to creating Indian-owned intellectual property and fabless semiconductor businesses. Advanced packaging and assembly, which includes Assembly, Testing, Marking, and Packaging (ATMP) and Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT), is another potential market. As chiplet-based architectures gain popularity, Deepak Gupta, a semiconductor and AI technology specialist and co-founder of Style Lounge, thinks sophisticated packaging offers India a significant opportunity. It allows nations to more rapidly integrate into global semiconductor supply

chains while requiring comparatively less capital investment than wafer fabrication, which is the process of producing semiconductor chips on silicon wafers. Mature-node semiconductor production, which concentrates on creating tested, high-volume chips used in industries like automotive, industrial equipment, power electronics, and telecom, also holds a lot of promise, Gupta continued. These categories have the potential to provide long-term, sustainable value when combined with India’s expanding electronics market. Incentives can aid in the construction of factories, but they cannot guarantee long-term success, according to him, “achieving high manufacturing yields, strong capacity utilization, and a steady pipeline of customers are essential for commercial viability.” The percentage of chips generated by a factory that satisfy the necessary quality criteria is known as manufacturing yield. A poor yield makes it more difficult for a manufacturer to compete on price since each useful chip costs more.

Bitcoin Drops to \$63,000 Amid Fed Rate Uncertainty



NewDelhi: Due to market pressure, the price of bitcoin drops to a 10-day low. On Tuesday, Bitcoin (BTC) fell more than 2%, reaching its lowest point in over ten days at just over \$63,000 per token. After months of decline, the biggest cryptocurrency in the world has found it difficult to pick up steam, and traders are keeping an eye on a number of variables that could determine its future course. The drop occurred as investors were more wary due to the weakness of stocks linked to artificial intelligence, the uncertainty around the Federal Reserve’s upcoming interest rate decision, and worries about the delays in significant US cryptocurrency legislation. Bitcoin sentiment was negatively impacted by the sell-off of AI stocks, Fed uncertainties, and delays in cryptocurrency laws. The recent drop in Bitcoin was attributed to broader market pressure, particularly the precipitous decline in AI-related stocks that impacted investor confidence in riskier assets. According to Yahoo Finance, investors are also waiting for indications from the Federal Reserve regarding future monetary policy because interest rate choices can affect demand for risky assets like cryptocurrencies. At the same time, hopes around a major crypto regulation bill in Congress have weakened as lawmakers face a deadline before the August recess. Prediction market Polymarket showed the odds of the Clarity Act passing this year fell to

35% from 55% earlier this month, reflecting weaker confidence among traders. According to analysts, if the sell-off continues, Bitcoin may find support around \$55,000. If the cryptocurrency law doesn’t advance, Bitcoin may become more weaker, but analysts think the drop may present a buying opportunity. Ed Engel, an analyst at Compass Point, stated that if prices continue to decline, Bitcoin might find solid support close to the \$55,000 mark. Engel wrote in a note on Monday night that “if Clarity Act doesn’t pass, we see very strong support near ~\$55k and would be buyers if BTC sells off this far,” according to Yahoo Finance. As cryptocurrency ownership declines and bitcoin prices plummet, investors are skeptical about Trump’s bitcoin effort. The Fed’s decision becomes crucial to Bitcoin’s future course. The Federal Reserve’s policy announcement on Wednesday is being eagerly watched by investors since the central bank’s message may have an impact on Bitcoin prices. Sean Farrell, head of digital assets at Fundstrat, stated, “For crypto, I continue to view the Fed’s messaging around financial conditions and inflation as more important than the policy decision itself,” according to Yahoo Finance. “My view is that we receive another ‘hawkish hold,’ but one must respect the non-negligible possibility of a rate hike,” he said. Bitcoin may be exhibiting indications of a long-term bottom, accord-

ing to chart analysts. Some technical analysts think Bitcoin is exhibiting early indications that a long-term bottom may be emerging, even if the cryptocurrency is still under pressure. After months of decline, Bitcoin is exhibiting its “most encouraging signs yet” of setting a bottom, according to CNBC. After returning almost 60% of the profits from the 2022–2025 rise, Bitcoin has recently stabilized over \$58,000, according to Openheimer technical analyst Ari Wald. Although another decrease cannot be ruled out, he thinks that the recent price behavior of Bitcoin indicates that the cryptocurrency may be heading toward a bottom. “Downside momentum has begun to decelerate based on a bullish divergence in bitcoin’s weekly relative strength index, a measurement of the speed of price,” Wald said in a note Monday, per CNBC. According to Wald, Bitcoin might keep stabilizing until it rises over its 200-day moving average. “We can’t rule out a last run lower akin to Q4 2022, but we anticipate more consolidation until bitcoin can regain its 200-day average. However, the most positive indication of a forming bottom that we have seen so far is the recent activity. The 200-day moving average of bitcoin is presently at about \$72,000. Regaining this level, according to analysts, may be a significant indication that Bitcoin’s trajectory is improving

Radico, Tilaknagar and Allied Gain Up to 4%

Mumbai:Liquor company shares were in high demand; in Wednesday’s intraday trading, Radico Khaitan, United Spirits, Tilaknagar Industries, and Allied Blenders and Distilleries all saw increases of up to 4%. Radico Khaitan surged 4% on the BSE during Wednesday’s intraday transactions, reaching a record high of ₹4,451. For the fourth consecutive trading day, the stock was quoted higher, rising 9% during that time. It has increased by 70% in the last four months. USL’s share price increased by 2% in intraday transactions to reach a 52-week high of ₹1,536. For the sixth consecutive trading day, the stock increased by 10%. In contrast to the BSE Sensex’s 1% increase, Tilaknagar Industries and Allied Blenders both saw increases of more than 3%. With 50.3% year-over-year rise in profits before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization as well as a notable margin improvement, Radico Khaitan demonstrated good operating performance in Q1FY27. Net revenue was ₹1,683.7 crore, up 11.8% year over year. While Regular & Other revenues fell 17.3% YoY, Prestige & Aboves maintained its robust growth trajectory with 36% YoY revenue increase to ₹970 crore on a high base. Despite a ₹30 crore impact from higher packaging costs, a better revenue mix and benign raw material costs contributed to a 610bps YoY expansion in gross margins to 49.1% and a 531bps YoY expansion in EBITDA margins to a record-high 20.7%. EBITDA grew 50.3% YoY to ₹348.9crore.

White House teleprompter operator accused over Trump bets no longer in job, official says

Washington: A White House teleprompter operator who reportedly used inside knowledge to make bets about Donald Trump's speeches on the online prediction market Kalshi is no longer in his post, according to a White House official.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly about the personnel matter and spoke on condition of anonymity, said on Tuesday that Gabriel Perez "no longer works in the federal government".

The official would not say whether Perez resigned or was fired.

The White House confirmed earlier this month that Perez had been placed on unpaid leave after ABC News reported he had used his inside knowledge to win more than \$100,000 betting on what the president would say in big speeches, including his State of the Union address earlier this year.

That figure is more than half the \$175,000 salary he earned for his teleprompter work, according to White House personnel records.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt had described the reports of the insider trading as "deeply unfortunate and, frankly, a disgrace".

Robert Denault, Kalshi's lawyer and head of enforcement, said on X following the ABC News report that the "Kalshi surveillance team promptly flagged, investigated and referred these trades" to the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the body that has regulatory authority over such matters.

His statement did not name Perez, who has operated Trump's teleprompter since 2016.

The ABC report described suspicious activity on Kalshi's "Mentions" market, in which users can place



bets on phrases and specific words that might be used in public speeches. Kalshi

recently began requiring users to disclose their place of employment, and the

platform's policy prohibits betting based on information that users gain because of

their job. Prediction markets, which allow users to place speculative bets on a seem-

ingly endless list of public events and trends, have exploded recently. Trading volume on Kalshi, one of the two largest prediction market trading platforms, soared from \$100m last year to \$3bn today, according to an estimate cited by CNBC.

Kalshi recently said it would allow users to bet on drug trial results.

The rise in prediction markets has created a major new incentive for insider trading. In April, federal prosecutors indicted Gannon Ken Van Dyke for allegedly betting on the whether former Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro would be deposed. Prosecutors say Van Dyke, a US soldier who worked on the operation to remove and extradite Maduro, walked away with \$400,000 in earnings.

That same month, Kalshi said it had fined three political candidates who placed bets on their own races.

In one case, Mark Moran placed a small bet on whether he would run for office before announcing his bid for a US Senate seat in Virginia as an independent.

The industry's proponents describe prediction markets as a form of derivatives, a type of contract that allows parties to make bets on the future value of an asset or commodity.

Critics, however, have raised concerns from state authorities who view the industry as little more than unregulated gambling. Minnesota became the first state to ban prediction markets entirely in May, but a federal judge temporarily blocked the law before it went into effect.

Trump has defended the prediction markets industry, saying that states should avoid regulating them, leaving the job instead to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

Zelensky Urges Trump to Strengthen Ukraine's Air Defences

Washington: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has appealed to U.S. President Donald Trump for additional anti-ballistic missile systems and interceptors, stressing that strengthening Ukraine's air defence network remains the country's most urgent military requirement amid the ongoing war with Russia.

Speaking to reporters after meetings with President Trump and U.S. senators in Washington on Tuesday, Zelensky said Ukraine has significantly improved its ability to counter drone attacks but continues to face serious challenges in defending against ballistic missile strikes.

"The real problem is anti-ballistic systems and anti-ballistic missiles," Zelen-



sky said, adding that he had outlined Ukraine's defence requirements during his discussions with American leaders.

The Ukrainian leader noted that domestically developed drones, along with Western-supplied systems,

have enabled Kyiv's forces to intercept and destroy many Iranian-designed and Russian-operated drones. However, he said ballistic missiles remain a major threat because they travel at extremely high speeds and require advanced missile

defence systems for interception.

Ukraine has repeatedly urged its Western allies to expand military assistance, particularly in the form of sophisticated air defence systems capable of intercepting ballistic missiles

targeting cities, energy infrastructure and military installations.

Zelensky's visit to Washington comes at a critical stage in the conflict, as Russia continues long-range missile and drone attacks across Ukraine. Kyiv has warned that sustained international military support will be essential to protecting civilian populations and maintaining its defensive capabilities.

The United States remains one of Ukraine's largest security partners, having provided billions of dollars in military assistance since the conflict began. Discussions in Washington are expected to focus on strengthening Ukraine's air defence, accelerating defence cooperation and coordinating future security assistance.

Hull funeral director broke families' trust on 'almost industrial scale'



UK: A fraudulent funeral director broke the trust of families on an "almost industrial scale" as their loved ones' bodies were left "rotting away", a court has heard.

Robert Bush, owner of Legacy Independent Funeral Directors in Hull, appeared at Hull crown court on Monday for a five-day sentencing hearing. He previously pleaded guilty to 67 offences, including 30 counts of preventing lawful and decent burial.

Several family members read out their victim impact statements to the court, recounting nightmares and PTSD from Bush's offending, with some breaking down in tears and struggling to speak.

On his way into court, Bush, 48, from Otley, West Yorkshire, told reporters he was sorry to the families affected.

Several family members recalled Bush "smiling" as he handed them the wrong ashes, while their loved ones remained secretly uncremated. When Jayne Rimmington came to collect the ashes of her 86-year-old mother, Shirley Wright, in October 2023, she was surprised by how heavy they were. Bush claimed this was due to her "bone density".

The body of Wright was recovered on the Legacy premises five months after her death. "I trusted him," said Rimmington. "He stood there smiling, handed me the box, when she was still laying there, rotting away. It's a purely evil

thing to do."

Vicky Mitchell received the ashes of her father, Colin Wainman, in a navy blue box inside a Hobbycraft bag, with Bush apologising at the time for not having any gift bags at hand. The 69-year-old's body was recovered on 8 March 2024, 198 days after his death.

"My opinion is he is a charlatan," Mitchell told the court. "A gravedigger from the 1800s. He didn't care."

Prosecutor Chris Paxton KC said Bush "operated within the heart of the community for around 14 years, entrusted by hundreds of bereaved families in their time of need". However, Bush "breached that trust on an almost industrial scale in a myriad of ways".

In a search of the Legacy premises in March 2024, Humberside police found many bodies left uncovered and in varying states of decomposition, stored on racks on both sides of the room. One naked body still lay on a stretcher on the floor. Flowers, rings, teddy bears and cards with messages, intended to be placed with loved ones, had been swept under the floor.

The removal of bodies took two days and several officers, including a disaster identification team. Bodies had to be identified by dental records, DNA examination or fingerprints.

Police also uncovered the remains of an 18-week stillborn boy, identified as Sunny Beverley-Conlin, on the floor of the premises, inside what appeared to be

a police evidence bag. His mother, Jasmine Beverley, believed he had been given a funeral and cremated.

Rea Burton, granddaughter of David Burton, attended the Legacy funeral home to collect his ashes in December 2023. Bush asked Burton what the family intended to do with the ashes, to which Burton replied they would be put in necklace charms for the family and her uncle would put some into the ink for a tattoo. Bush told her this was a "brilliant idea".

"In reality, Rob had deceived us," said Burton. "He had abandoned and hidden our loved one for months and had given us a stranger's ashes with a smile on his face."

After the funeral service of 94-year-old Norman Bridger, his daughter, Karen King, placed what she believed to be her father's ashes into lockets worn by her and her mother. "I now feel violated [that] I had some unknown person's ashes so close to me," King said.

To thank him for his work on the funeral, King had also given Bush a bottle of port. "The smile on his face as he accepted it will always haunt me," she told the court.

David Gorbitt visited Bush to collect what he believed were the ashes of his wife, Susan, in September 2023. He was handed a paper bag containing a small cardboard box with her name. When Gorbitt told Bush he "hope[d] they're the right ones", Bush replied: "Yes, they are definitely the right ones."

Gorbitt scattered the ashes at the same site as her son's in a local country park, as per Susan's wishes. Her body was recovered at the Legacy premises six months after her death.

In his statement, Gorbitt said he felt guilty for being "unable to fulfil my wife's last request, that I deal with her death quickly" as she wanted, recalling that "Susan would say: 'You know I do not like the cold.'"

Like many families, Gorbitt also called for stronger regulation of the funeral industry. "It is hard to believe a person needs more permits to sell burgers than to deal with the dead," he said.

Shots fired at US consulate in Toronto for a second time this year

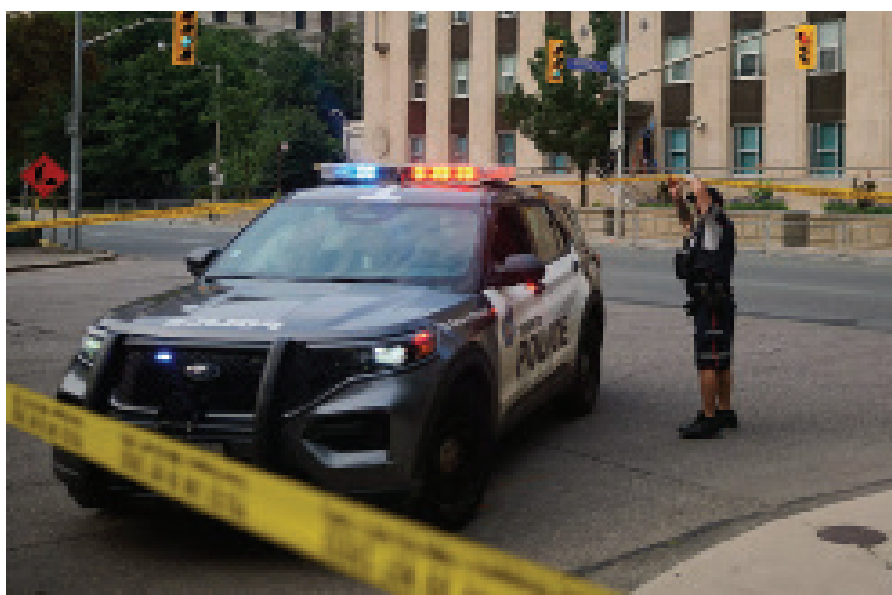
Canada: Police in Toronto are investigating after a gunshot was fired at the US consulate in the city - the second time this year such an incident has happened.

Early on Monday morning, an officer stationed outside the consulate building heard the sound of a single gunshot and noticed a white car without a licence plate fleeing the scene.

Police briefly engaged in a high-speed car chase before ending it over safety concerns. No injuries were reported in the incident. It is unclear how many individuals were involved in the attack.

Monday's shooting comes after Toronto police arrested three people for a similar incident in March, which investigators have linked to a broader gun-for-hire network. Toronto police said they were investigating the latest attack with the help of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and international law enforcement partners.

Supt Jonathan Ko with the RCMP called it "another troubling incident", while the city's mayor, Ol-



ivia Chow, called the attack "brazen".

"I want to say to the person or persons responsible: We will get you," Chow added. The shooting occurred around 04:45 local time (09:45 BST). Officers said they recovered one shell casing at the scene and damage to the building's facade.

At least two individuals were inside the consulate at the time, Toronto Police Deputy Chief Frank Barredo said but he noted the

building is "very heavily fortified" and those inside likely did not hear the gun shot.

He added that the investigation remains ongoing and that police across the city have been asked to lookout for the potential suspects.

In a post on X, the US consulate in Toronto thanked the police for their response.

Police have been stationed outside the consulate since March, when shots were fired outside the building in what police at the time

called a "national security incident". No one was injured in that attack.

In June, police carried out raids in relation to the shooting. Police officer Marc Pinizzotto, 43, was killed during the operation.

Police later arrested several suspects aged 18 and 19 for allegedly carrying out a string of shootings, including the March attack outside the consulate, as part of a larger gun-for-hire network. Two Jewish-owned bakeries in the city were also target-

ed, at least one by gunfire, over the weekend.

Police said on Monday there was currently nothing to link the two incidents, but they did not rule out a connection.

"I'm totally disgusted by the shootings and vandalism that took place in Toronto over the last few days," Ontario Premier Doug Ford said.

Prime Minister Mark Carney, meanwhile, said he was "appalled" and added: "Law enforcement has my full support as they conduct a thorough investigation and hold those responsible to account."

In May, US officials arrested an Iraqi national, 32-year-old Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, for allegedly planning more than a dozen attacks in North America and Europe targeting Jewish institutions and US interests, including the one at the US consulate in Toronto.

Police in Toronto have not said if al-Saadi is linked to their investigation, and they have not specified a motive for this latest consulate shooting.

These are some essential blushes for your vanity kit



A quality blush can immediately enhance your facial appearance, infuse warmth into your skin tone, and provide a vibrant, youthful radiance. Whether you favor a subtle daily look or extravagant party makeup, selecting the appropriate blush can significantly impact your overall appearance. Nev-

ertheless, with the multitude of formulas on the market today, finding the ideal one can be quite perplexing. Instead of sticking to just one type, consider building a blush collection that suits different occasions, skin types, and makeup styles. Here are the essential types of blushes every

beauty enthusiast should have in their vanity.

1. Powder Blush Powder blush is the most common and beginner-friendly option. It is easy to apply, blend, and build according to your desired intensity. Available in matte, satin, and shimmer finishes, powder blushes work especially well for

oily and combination skin as they help absorb excess oil throughout the day.

A fluffy blush brush distributes the product evenly, making it difficult to overdo your makeup. Powder blush is ideal for daily office wear, college, and casual outings.

Best for: Oily and combination skin.

2. Cream Blush Cream blushes have become increasingly popular because they create a fresh, natural-looking flush. Their creamy texture melts seamlessly into the skin, giving your cheeks a healthy, dewy finish.

These blushes can be applied using your fingertips, a makeup sponge, or a dense brush. Cream formulas are particularly suitable for dry and mature skin because they don't emphasise flaky patches or fine lines.

If you enjoy the "no-makeup makeup" trend, a cream blush deserves a permanent spot in your makeup bag.

Best for: Dry, normal, and mature skin.

3. Liquid Blush Liquid blush delivers highly pigmented colour while maintaining a lightweight feel on the skin. Only a tiny drop is enough to create a natural-looking flush, making it one of the most long-lasting blush formulas available.

These blushes blend beautifully into foundation and skin tints, creating a seamless finish. Since they dry relatively quickly, it's important to blend them immediately after application.

Liquid blushes are excellent for achieving radiant, glowing skin without looking overly made up.

Best for: All skin types, especially those who love a fresh, radiant finish.

4. Stick Blush

Blush sticks are incredibly convenient for busy mornings and travel. Their compact packaging makes them easy to carry in your handbag for quick touch-

ups throughout the day.

Most stick blushes feature creamy formulas that glide smoothly across the skin. Simply swipe the product onto your cheeks and blend using your fingers or a makeup sponge.

Many stick blushes are multi-purpose products that can also be used on the lips and eyelids, making them a practical addition to any makeup collection.

Best for: Travel, beginners, and on-the-go makeup.

5. Tinted Balm Blush

Tinted balm blushes combine skincare and makeup in one product. Infused with moisturising ingredients like shea butter, jojoba oil, or vitamin E, these blushes nourish the skin while adding a soft hint of colour. These balms can be doubled as a lip balms and a cheek tint as well.

They are perfect for people who prefer effortless beauty routines and want a fresh, healthy glow without wearing heavy makeup.

Since they are sheer and forgiving, they are also ideal for beginners.

Best for: Dry skin and everyday natural makeup.

6. Shimmer Blush

When your makeup calls for extra radiance, a shimmer blush is the perfect choice. These blushes contain fine light-reflecting particles that give your cheeks a luminous glow while adding colour.

Shimmer blushes work beautifully for festive occasions, weddings, evening parties, and celebrations. However, if you have textured skin or enlarged pores, use them sparingly, as shimmer can highlight uneven texture.

Best for: Evening makeup and festive occasions.

How to choose the right blush

Selecting the right blush depends on your skin type, preferred finish, and lifestyle. Oily skin benefits most from powder blushes.

Dry skin looks healthier with cream, stick, or balm

blushes. Long workdays call for long-lasting liquid blush. Travel-friendly makeup kits should include a blush stick.

Minimal makeup routines pair well with gel or balm blushes.

Glamorous occasions are perfect for shimmer blushes.

You can also experiment with layering different formulas. For example, applying a cream blush first and setting it with a matching powder blush helps increase wear time and creates a richer colour payoff.

Finally, the right blush not only enhances your complexion but also brings life, dimension, and freshness to your overall makeup look.

Investing in a variety of blush formulas allows you to experiment with different finishes and techniques, helping you create everything from a subtle daytime glow to a bold, statement-making look with ease.

Sweaty scalp bothers me Maybe these six menthol shampoos can hel



While the monsoon season offers respite from the intense heat, it also brings about an itchy and sweaty scalp. If you are experiencing this discomfort, menthol shampoos could be highly beneficial. Extracted from mint oils, menthol is recognized for its cooling effect, which immediately calms the scalp and delivers a refreshing, revitalizing sensation. Whether you are struggling with oily roots, scalp irritation, or simply desire a refreshing cleanse after a long day, incorporating a menthol shampoo into your hair care regimen can prove to be advantageous. Unlike regular shampoos, menthol-infused formulas create a cooling effect on your scalp that helps reduce discomfort caused by heat, sweat, and product buildup. Many menthol shampoos are also enriched with nourishing ingredients such as tea tree oil, peppermint, or botanical extracts that support scalp hygiene and promote healthier-looking hair.

6 menthol shampoos that are worth trying

1. Head & Shoulders Anti Dandruff Shampoo Cool Menthol For Men & Women - 180 ML: Stay fresh while tackling dandruff with Head & Shoulders Anti-Dandruff Shampoo + Cool Menthol. Formulated with Zinc Pyrithione, cleansing agents, and menthol, it helps fight dandruff, soothes the scalp,

and leaves a long-lasting cooling sensation. It also removes excess oil and impurities without drying your hair. Amazon customers frequently praise its refreshing feel, noticeable reduction in dandruff, and ability to keep the scalp clean for longer. Many also appreciate its pleasant fragrance and suitability for regular use.

2. Pilgrim Australian Tea Tree & Salicylic Acid Anti-Dandruff Shampoo with Cool Menthol | Up to 100% Dandruff Reduction*| Soothes Itchy Scalp: Pilgrim Australian Tea Tree & Salicylic Acid Anti-Dandruff Shampoo combines Australian tea tree oil, salicylic acid, and menthol to deeply cleanse the scalp while helping reduce flakes and itchiness. Tea tree oil helps purify the scalp, while salicylic acid gently removes dead skin build-up.

Amazon reviewers often mention that the shampoo leaves the scalp feeling refreshed and cleaner after every wash. Many users also appreciate its lightweight formula and pleasant cooling effect.

3. Head & Shoulders , Anti Dandruff Shampoo + Conditioner, Cool Menthol , 180 ML: Enjoy dandruff protection and hair conditioning in one step with Head & Shoulders Anti-Dandruff Shampoo + Conditioner Cool Menthol. Enriched with Zinc Pyrithione, conditioning ingredients, and menthol, it helps control dandruff while

leaving hair soft, smooth, and manageable.

The cooling formula refreshes the scalp after every wash. Amazon customers commonly appreciate its ability to reduce flakes without making hair feel dry. Many also like its creamy texture and refreshing fragrance for everyday use.

4. Dove Men+Care Fresh & Clean 2in1 Shampoo+Conditioner, 340 ml: Dove Men+Care Fresh & Clean 2-in-1 Shampoo + Conditioner offers convenient cleansing and conditioning in one bottle. Made with menthol, moisturising ingredients, and gentle cleansing agents, it removes dirt and excess oil while keeping hair soft and fresh. The cooling sensation makes it ideal after workouts or on hot days. Amazon reviewers often highlight its pleasant fragrance, easy lather, and ability to leave hair feeling clean without weighing it down.

5. Mancode Anti-Dandruff Shampoo with Zinc + Menthol for Men & women- 400ml: Mancode Anti-Dandruff Shampoo is designed to cleanse the scalp while helping reduce dandruff and itchiness. It contains tea tree oil, menthol, and nourishing botanical extracts that help refresh the scalp and remove excess oil. The cooling formula provides an invigorating wash, making it suitable for regular grooming. Amazon customers often

mention that it leaves their scalp feeling cleaner and fresher after use. Several reviewers also appreciate its masculine fragrance and rich lather.

6. Clear Men Cooling Itch Control Shampoo 315ml – Anti-Dandruff Formula with Instant Cooling Effect, Long-Lasting Itch Relief: Clear Men Cooling Itch Control Shampoo helps fight dandruff while delivering instant scalp freshness. Formulated with menthol, anti-dandruff ingredients, and taurine, it helps relieve scalp itchiness and keeps the scalp feeling cool.

The formula effectively removes dirt, oil, and flakes for a cleaner scalp. Amazon reviewers frequently praise its strong cooling sensation and noticeable dandruff control. Many users also mention that it leaves their hair feeling fresh, clean, and manageable throughout the day.

Benefits of Menthol Shampoos

Provides a cooling sensation: Menthol delivers an instant refreshing effect that leaves the scalp feeling cool and revitalised.

Helps soothe the itchy scalp: Its calming properties may reduce mild scalp irritation and itchiness.

Controls excess oil: Menthol shampoos help remove excess sebum, making them ideal for oily scalps.

Deep cleanses the scalp: They effectively eliminate dirt, sweat, and product residue, leaving the scalp fresh.

Promotes a healthier scalp environment: A clean scalp can support stronger, healthier-looking hair over time.

Reduces post-workout discomfort: The cooling effect is especially refreshing after exercise or during hot, humid weather.

May minimise dandruff symptoms: Many menthol shampoos include anti-dandruff ingredients that help reduce flakes and scalp discomfort.

Leaves hair feeling fresh: The minty fragrance provides a long-lasting feeling of cleanliness and freshness.

While menthol shampoos are suitable for most hair types, people with very sensitive or excessively dry scalps should choose a gentle formula and avoid overuse.

To control poofy hair, choose a monsoon-friendly hairstyle

Does your hair also appear as an unruly, voluminous mane during the monsoon season? In this rainy period, experiencing a bad hair day can seem to last forever. You might question what you are doing incorrectly when your newly washed hair becomes oily and frizzy rather than providing the sleek, full-bodied look you anticipated. Although your haircare regimen may contribute to this issue, it is primarily the elevated humidity levels characteristic of the monsoon season that are to blame.

But with the right haircut and styling, you can keep the unwanted frizz and puffiness under control.

Addressing this concern, Melissa Hughe, technical and education director at Beauty Garage Limited, shared why hair becomes frizzy and poofy during the monsoon and recommended three hairstyles that may help keep it manageable.

Why does Indian hair get frizzy and poofy during the monsoon season?

Melissa helped explain why Indian hair type gets frizzy: "The general Indian hair type is coarse and wavy to curly, characterised by raised cuticles. In addition to the hair type, high humidity levels during the monsoon season cause swelling of the hair, leading to poofiness and frizz."

So the natural structure of Indian hair makes it more vulnerable to being frizzier and puffier. The raised cuticles of the hair absorb excess moisture, which is common in the rainy season. Now, when you visit a salon, what type of haircut should you ask for? According to the expert, a blunt or softly layered cut is among the most monsoon-friendly options for dense, medium-to-coarse and often wavy hair.

Describing why, she said, "These cuts have weight to keep the hair

hanging smoothly while allowing the natural texture to form in a controlled way."

Here are her recommended hairstyles for the monsoon:

Hairstyle 1: Blunt one-length cut or lob – the weight of the hair pulls it downwards, reducing the impact of poofiness. Great for thick, straight to slightly wavy hair.

Hairstyle 2: Long soft layers – allow for even wave formation, while the weight of the length controls poofiness.

Hairstyle 3: Curly layers – create uniform volume distribution, thereby enhancing curl definition and controlling poofiness.

Anything to use to control frizziness?

At home, Melissa recommended using anti-freeze serums, leave-in creams, and gels to manage the frizz and poofiness.

Top Analog Watches for Men Under Rs 2000

A fashionable analogue watch remains timeless, and it is not necessary to invest a large sum to acquire one. Whether you are purchasing a watch for daily office use, college, formal events, or to enhance your everyday appearance, there are numerous outstanding choices available for under Rs 2,000 from reputable brands. Timex, Titan, Casio, Fastrack and Sonata all offer reliable quartz watches that combine classic designs with dependable performance. Leather straps remain a timeless choice for formal wear, while metal bracelets add a more contemporary touch for everyday use. To help you narrow down your choices, we've picked five of the best analogue watches currently available on Amazon. These models stand out for their brand reputation, design, value for money and customer feedback. Quick picks

1. Timex Classics Analog Watch: The Timex Classics is one of the best bargains in this category. The deep blue dial paired with a brown leather strap gives it a timeless look that works equally well with office shirts, jeans or semi-formal attire. Its clean design, trusted quartz movement and attractive pricing make it an excellent everyday watch for first-time buyers and anyone looking for dependable style on a budget.

Excellent value for money. Attractive blue dial and brown leather strap. Lightweight and comfortable for daily wear. Trusted Timex reliability. 2. Titan Workwear

Urban Edge Quartz Analog Watch: Titan's Urban Edge collection focuses on understated elegance, and this model is no exception. The crisp white dial, slim silver-tone case and black leather strap create a clean, sophisticated look that's ideal for office wear, interviews and formal occasions. It offers the premium feel Titan is known for while remaining comfortably within budget. Elegant minimalist design, Comfortable for all-day wear, Excellent build quality, Trusted Titan brand. Smaller discount than competing models

Lacks a date window

3. Fastrack Vyb Aviator Quartz Analog Watch: If you're after something that looks more contemporary than a traditional dress watch, the Fastrack Vyb Aviator is worth considering. Its blue sunburst dial, gunmetal finish and matching metal bracelet give it a bold, premium appearance that suits younger buyers and casual outfits. It stands out without looking flashy. Stylish modern design, Premium-looking metal bracelet, Eye-catching blue dial, Great choice for casual wear. Heavier than leather-strap watches

Less suited to very form

4. Casio Enticer Men MTP-VT03L-1BDF: The Casio Enticer is arguably the strongest all-round option under Rs 2,000. Its minimalist black dial, slim silver case and clean design give it a much more expensive appearance than its price suggests. Combined with Casio's dependable quartz movement and the biggest discount on this

list, it's an excellent buy for almost any occasion. Reliable Casio quartz movement. Biggest discount on this list. Suitable for both formal and casual wear. No date display. Leather strap is fairly basic. 5. Sonata Quartz Analog NS77105NM01: For buyers who prefer a full-metal watch, this Sonata model offers impressive value. The black dial and matching bracelet create a sleek monochrome look, while the date display adds useful everyday functionality. It's a practical choice for someone who wants the durability of a metal bracelet without spending beyond Rs 2,000. To shortlist these watches, we focused on products from well-established brands with a strong reputation for reliability and after-sales service. We prioritised models that are currently available for under Rs 2,000 on Amazon and offer genuine value rather than simply the biggest discounts. We also considered customer ratings

and reviews, overall design, comfort for everyday wear, versatility across formal and casual occasions, and features such as leather or metal straps, date display and water resistance. Finally, we selected watches that offer distinct styles so buyers can choose between classic dress watches, minimalist designs and modern everyday options. Things to keep in mind before buying an analogue watch

Choose a style that matches your wardrobe

Leather-strap watches generally pair better with formal and office attire, while metal bracelets are more versatile for everyday use and tend to be more durable over time.

Pay attention to case size. A watch that's too large or too small can look out of proportion. Most men find watches with a case diameter between 38 mm and 42 mm comfortable for everyday wear.



ENTERTAINMENT

Bigg Boss 20 expected contestants, date



Mumbai : Anticipation for Bigg Boss Season 20 is growing rapidly following the reveal of the new season logo. The landmark edition is bringing major behind-the-scenes updates to the popular reality show.

Reports state that the makers are completely revamping the Bigg Boss house design. Set designer Omung Kumar and his wife Vanita Garud Kumar will not create the set this year. Instead, art directors Kanchan and Rupali have taken over design duties. The duo previously designed the set for the reality show The 50. In addition to the visual overhaul, host Salman Khan will return to lead the show. The new season follows a digital-first strategy. It will stream on JioHotstar before airing on Colors TV. Production company Banijay Asia also plans to launch all six regional language editions of Bigg Boss simultaneously during this festive period.

Probable contestants list for Season 20: Mahhi Vij, Geeta Basra, Jannat Zubair, Faisal Shaikh (Mr Faisu), Sunil Pal, Nia Sharma, Pearl V Puri, and Showik Chakraborty. Bigg Boss 20 is scheduled to premiere on Colors TV and JioHotstar on September 6, 2026.

Salman Khan launches flood relief drive in Assam, extends food and essential aid to thousands

Guwahati : Salman Khan has come forward to help those affected with the ongoing devastating floods in Assam. The Bollywood superstar has Through his charitable organisation Being Human, the actor has joined hands with the Salman Khan Fan Club (SKFC) Assam to coordinate relief efforts in some of the worst-hit areas of the state. Khan is currently shooting for director Vamshi Paidipally's upcoming film in Mumbai but has reportedly been coordinating with his fan club to ensure assistance reaches those in need.

Reportedly, the relief initiative is being carried out in multiple phases, with the first phase focusing on immediate necessities. Ready-to-eat food packets are being distributed to flood-affected families in



Sivasagar. The packets reportedly contain items including biscuits, jaggery, poha, puffed rice, bread, cheese and jam. In the following days, the relief teams will also provide drinking water, water-purification tablets, sanitary pads and mosquito coils as part of the initial assistance. The subsequent phases are expected to expand the scope of the initiative, with ration kits and medicines

planned for distribution. Recently, Alia Bhatt also took to the stories section of her Instagram handle and appealed for 'immediate relief'. "It happens every year and it still catches us off guard. Assam needs immediate relief right now, and it'll need support for the long road to recovery. If you've been wondering how you can help. I'll be sharing a few ways we can support

relief efforts over the next few days, through organisations working on the ground," the actress wrote.

For the unversed, the initiative comes at a time when Assam has been dealing with the aftermath of severe flooding. On July 28, the flood death toll stood at 68, while 4,45,495 people remained affected across six districts, according to an official bulletin. Recently, PM Modi assured the MPs of the Centre's full support in tackling the crisis and appreciated the efforts of the Assam government in managing the flood situation. While a central team is already in Assam assessing the damage, the prime minister also indicated that a senior Union minister would be deputed to the state to further strengthen coordination and relief efforts.

Rakhi Sawant calls out Kangana Ranaut over Gen Z controversy



Mumbai : Rakhi Sawant has strongly reacted to Kangana Ranaut's remarks on Gen Z student protesters, coming out in support of the youngsters and questioning the actress-politician's comments. This comes a day after Kangana called Gen Z 'generation gutter', and also made remarks about young women who took part in the CJP-led protest. Rakhi called Kangana 'chudail', and said that young girls and students of the country should not be spoken about in such a manner. She also questioned Kangana's position as a Member of Parliament, and brought up the actress' past controversies while responding to her remarks.

Sharing a video on Instagram, Rakhi Sawant took a dig at Kangana's political

journey and questioned how she earned such a position. "What did you do to become MP? If you ever go out and contest elections, you won't even get people's votes. I don't know how you became such a big name in Mandi, or how you ended up becoming whatever position you hold today," she said. Rakhi further called Kangana a 'chudail' (witch), and slammed her for her remarks about Gen Z and especially young women.

"What kind of things are you saying about the girls of our country? What are you saying about my students, about the daughters of our nation? You had faced a slap incident at the airport, didn't you? Aren't you afraid? You will face people's anger everywhere if you continue like this," she said, while referring to the 2024 incident when Kangana was slapped by a CISF constable in Chandigarh airport, allegedly over 'disrespecting farmers'.

Targaryen war reaches boiling point: 'house of the dragon' season 3 enters its final two weeks

Los Angeles : House of the Dragon Season 3, streaming on JioHotstar, has hurtled through betrayals, battles and heartbreak on its way to a finale just two weeks away. From a devastating premiere to a shocking death in the penultimate stretch, here's a recap of the biggest moments defining the Dance of the Dragons this season, and everything still hanging in the balance.

Season 3 wasted no time raising the stakes, opening with a massive sea battle that claimed one of Team Black's own. Jacaerys Targaryen, one of Rhaenyra's

sons and heirs, is shot down and killed after his dragon Vermax goes down in the waters, a brutal, early gut-punch that set the tone for a season with no easy outs for anyone wearing a Targaryen sigil. A quiet market town became one of the season's biggest flashpoints. High-tower forces under Ormund seized Tumbleton, taking its people hostage and dealing Rhaenyra a stinging political blow. Furious but boxed in, the queen was forced to accept that burning the Greens out would mean burning her own people too, a decision that has haunted her strategy ever since.

As the war intensified, so did the personal toll. Rhaenyra struggled to balance grief with the demands of ruling, while Daemon shared a rare, vulnerable reunion with his daughter Rhaena. Meanwhile, a new power player began consolidating control behind the scenes, quietly pulling a young Targaryen further into danger, a storyline that's only grown more ominous with each passing week. The season's most acclaimed hour saw nearly every major character chasing an escape of some kind. Alicent tried to slip free of her captivity, Criston Cole

sought release from the man the war had turned him into, and a long-simmering feud between Larys and Aegon finally exploded into the open, while Daemon and Rhaenyra clashed hard over corruption creeping into the City Watch.

Just when it looked like Cole might get the glorious last stand he always imagined, he was cut down by archers in an ambush, dying with Alicent's handkerchief in hand. In the same explosive episode, Corlys Velaryon was captured by Ormund's forces, Aemond's location was nearly exposed, and a jaw-dropping

reveal about hidden dragon eggs raised the stakes for the war's endgame. With Criston Cole dead, Corlys a prisoner, and Aemond gearing up for a comeback, House of the Dragon heads into its final two episodes with nearly every alliance on shaky ground. Grief has hardened into ambition, secrets are surfacing faster than anyone can contain them, and the Dance of the Dragons is racing toward a finale that promises to reshape Westeros for good.

Catch up on House of the Dragon Season 3 before the last two episodes air, streaming on JioHotstar.



Suri cruise drops father tom cruise's surname, adopts 'Suri Noelle'

New York : Hollywood action icon Tom Cruise and actress Katie Holmes' daughter Suri has legally dropped her father's last name.

The 20-year-old legally changed her last name to Noelle from Cruise, according to the voter registration records obtained people.com. Suri currently attends Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and registered to vote in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania during her freshman year in October 2024. Her registration reads Suri Noelle. Noelle is also Holmes' middle name. Cruise and Holmes welcomed Suri in April 2006, married in November 2006, and divorced in 2012. Months before Suri registered to vote as Suri No-



elle, she used the name for her high school graduation in June 2024. That same weekend, Cruise was seen attending Taylor Swift's Eras tour at London's Wembley Stadium. Two months later, in celebration of her daughter's accomplishment, Holmes made rare comments about Suri while speaking to Town & Country. "I'm proud of my daughter. Of course, I will miss the close proximity, but I'm really proud of her and I'm happy," she said. "I remember being this age, this time of beginnings. It's exciting to learn about yourself, and I loved that time, so it makes me happy to think about it like that."

Then in December 2024, Holmes publicly addressed comments about Suri's relationship with Cruise, denying the reports that she inherited a trust fund from her father.

On the work front, Cruise is gearing up for the release of Digger Tom Cruise to star as 'most powerful man in the world' in 2026 film 'Digger' by Alejandro González Inarritu. The film is to release on October 2, 2026. It will have the superstar play the 'most powerful man in the world'. The actor stars as Digger Rockwell. While the exact plot is still under wraps, Warner Bros. provided a logline describing Cruise's character as "the most powerful man in the world" who "embarks on a frantic mission to prove that he is humanity's savior before the disaster he's unleashed destroys everything."

Emraan Hashmi dazzles in 'Awarapan 2' motion poster as 'tera mera rishta' makes a comeback

Mumbai : Emraan Hashmi is all set to return as Shivam Pandit in the highly-anticipated film 'Awarapan 2', the sequel to the 2007 film Awarapan. Fans have been eagerly waiting for any updates about the film, which is set to release in theatres in just 16 days! While the first song, 'Yeh Awarapan,' sung by Arijit Singh, was unveiled a few days ago, the makers have now offered fans a glimpse of 'Tera Mera Rishta Puraana'—the much-loved track from the original film that is set to return in Awarapan 2. While the original song was sung by Mustafa Zahid, the track in Awarapan 2 has been sung by Subodh Sharma.

On July 29, the makers of Awarapan 2 unveiled a new gritty motion poster featuring Emraan Hashmi as Shivam Pandit, giving fans their first glimpse of the much-awaited track Tera Mera Rishta. Adding to the nostalgia, lyricist Sayeed Quadri, who penned the original 'Tera Mera Rishta Puraana,' has returned to write the song this time as well. Joining Sayeed Quadri this time is composer Mithoon, who brings his



signature emotional weight to the composition. Meanwhile, lending his voice to the song is Subodh Sharma marking his third song in Awarapan 2 and quietly but definitively becoming the voice of Shivam Pandit in this film. The makers announced that the song will be unveiled soon, but did not reveal a specific release date.

Meanwhile, the motion poster features Emraan Hashmi's character Shivam Pandit drenched in the rain. The poster, along

with the nostalgic background teaser of Tera Mera Rishta, has taken fans down memory lane, leaving them reminiscing about the original film and its unforgettable moments. "Literally goosebumps," read one comment on the post, while another fan wrote, "Huge Expectations From Mithoon And Sayeed Quadri For This Song." A third comment read, "Aab hua asli musical comeback awarapan wali feeling k saath."

BTS boycotts 2027 grammy awards after introduction of 'best asian pop' category



Agency : Globally popular K-pop group BTS has decided not to submit its music for consideration at the 2027 Grammy Awards. Recently, members of the band took to their respective social media handles and announced the decision, expressing reservations about the Recording Academy's newly introduced Asian pop category. BTS said they want their music to be heard and appreciated without being categorised based on region or language.

"We decided not to submit to the Grammys this year," the members

wrote, and then added, "We want music to be heard and loved for what it is, rather than categorized by region or language." The new category has triggered a massive debate among K-pop fans and sections of the music industry over whether creating a separate Asian pop award amounts to greater recognition or further segregation of Asian artists.

One of the key arguments against the new category is the its language-based eligibility criteria. Reportedly, with its implementation, English-language songs by Asian

artists, including BTS' hugely successful Dynamite, would not qualify for the new category. This has raised questions about how Asian artists who make music primarily in English would be classified. "The timing of a new 'asian pop' category while a major asian act is having one of the most successful albums globally really exposes the problem: it's segregation and not inclusion," one of the X users wrote.

"No matter how successful some artists become, there are still systems and institutions that treat them as perpetual outsiders. And that's exactly why this conversation matters. Because when BTS were impossible to ignore, the response shouldn't have been to create another box and place Asian artists inside it. The response should have been to judge them by the same standards as every other artist competing for the biggest awards in music," added another. While The Grammys' has not reacted to the controversy as of now, the Recording Academy is accepting entries for the 69th ceremony, with entries open till August 21. However, BTS' decision means the group will sit out the upcoming Grammy race despite returning to the global music scene in 2026.

SC refuses stay on lord Jagannath animated film, warns against demands to ban artistic works

New Delhi : The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to stay the release of the animated film 'Mahaprabhu Jagannath', and expressed concern over increasing petitions to ban art on the grounds of sensitivity. A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan Supreme also remarked that the film does not, in any manner, undermine the devotion or reverence associated with Lord Jagannath. It dismissed the applications seeking to stop the release of the animated film while refusing to alter its July 17 order that allowed the producer to release the movie after the conclusion of the Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri on July 28. The top court also rejected the contention that portraying Lord Jagannath in animated form was offensive, orally observing that if art is curtailed because it hurts the sensitivities of some people, then works based on the Ramayana and Mahabharata could



never be created.

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration and a devotee had filed the applications to modify the July 17 order seeking to stop the release of the film. During the hearing today, the bench expressed concern over the growing tendency to seek judicial bans on art and creativity merely because they do not align with the

sensitivities of certain individuals. The apex court cautioned that if such petitions continue to be filed, the court may eventually have to pass stringent orders barring any depiction of Hindu gods and goddesses in any artistic form. Pointing to the many versions of the Ramayana across India and the country's rich artistic traditions, Justice Nagarathna said that

such a course would effectively stop films, television serials, paintings, sculptures, and other creative works based on Hindu mythology. "If there is such kind of sensibility and sensitivity, and two or three people to file a writ petition, we will pass an order that in respect of Hindu God, Goddess or Mythology, let there be no art form in India," said the bench.

During the CJP Protests, Delhi Police Notified X Accounts About Abusive Posts About PM Modi



New Delhi, July 29: Due to offensive postings directed against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and security personnel during student protests in the capital and abroad, Delhi Police have sent notifications to several social media accounts, including those of certain news portals. The police have learned that they have sent notices to X accounts requesting information about people who have posted abusive language. The number of X accounts that have received alerts is instantly unknown. After content uploaded both during and after the protests was reviewed, the police took

action. Police have examined comments, videos, and postings on various social media sites for potential legal infractions and their prospective effects on public order. Delhi Police had earlier said they had identified more than 400 social media handles allegedly linked to Pakistan that were actively circulating fake narratives, rumours and deepfake videos related to the demonstrations.

Two days ago, Delhi Police directed multiple social media platforms to remove posts and videos containing offensive and abusive remarks against the Prime Minister that were

uploaded during the student protests at Jantar Mantar and the violence linked to the July 20 'Sansad Chalo' march. According to Delhi Police, several posts using abusive language against the Prime Minister surfaced across various social media platforms during the protests and subsequent violence in the national capital. Officials said the Delhi Police's social media monitoring team has been continuously scanning online platforms to identify such content. Upon detecting objectionable posts, notices are being issued to the respective social media intermediaries, directing them to remove the content. According to police, a number of offensive remarks and films using derogatory language aimed at the prime minister have already been removed after the force sent out notifications. The cyber and social media teams are keeping a careful eye on online activity connected to the demonstrations in order to spot any more inflammatory posts and make sure that any information that is discovered to be in breach of relevant regulations is dealt with appropriately.

“Not In Derogatory Manner” R Ashwin Explains His Remark Regarding Vaibhav Sooryavanshi



New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi should “serve drinks” to his colleagues while he is not playing, according to former Indian cricket team spinner R Ashwin. Ashwin clarified that the comment was not meant to be disparaging and that the 15-year-old phenom would benefit from spending some time on the bench. In the T20I series against England, the young player made his debut and even scored two half-centuries against Zimbabwe. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi “can spend

time, can serve someone drinks, can sit outside,” as I had previously stated.”

He posted on his YouTube account, “It wasn’t in a disparaging way. “I was saying that he will get so much to learn. He has such a huge learning curve to go through that if he observes it while sitting outside, he’ll become even better. Don’t talk about dropping or picking — let him be, let him evolve. He’ll be a really phenomenal player,” he added. Sooryavanshi did not have a good outing against

England and he was bothered massively by Jofra Archer. He was dismissed by the England pacer’s short deliveries but looked in prime touch during the Zimbabwe series. Ashwin said that not many bowlers were able to bother Sooryavanshi and added that people cannot “write his obituary”. “Who do you think is the strongest batsman against the short ball? Ricky Ponting? Did he never get out on a short ball? He got out too. So we have to understand everyone has strengths, everyone has weaknesses. These things are common in international cricket. It’s simple — show your strengths, hide your weaknesses, and keep working on them behind the scenes. All these questions... How many times did he play against Jofra Archer at Trent Bridge? These are all experiences. We can’t write his obituary immediately. Can’t write someone off just like that,” Ashwin said. He’s such a little child. The issue is that we have such high expectations for him because of how well he did in the IPL. We anticipate that he would consistently perform like Rohit Sharma or Virat Kohli in every game. It doesn’t operate that way. In life, like in cricket, there will be ups and downs,” he continued.

Manu Bhaker Wins Another Bronze at the Shooting World Cup “Could’ve Done Better”

Hangzhou: After winning another bronze medal at the ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun in Hangzhou, China, Indian ace shooter Manu Bhaker said she was pleased to see her hard work reflected in her performance but thought there was always space for development. “One more bronze. This one makes me feel conflicted. In a post on X, Bhaker stated, “I know I could have done better, but I’m happy that I was able to improve my performance.” The Olympic medallist praised her staff and family for their support and said the improvement in her performance was promising. “What makes me happy is seeing that the hard work is showing. There’s still plenty of room for improvement, and that’s what keeps me motivated. One step at a time,” she said. Bhaker also thanked her team, family and fans for their continued support. “Major thanks to my team, my family, and each one of you for the unwavering love and support, it means the world to me,” she added. Indian pistol aces Esha Singh and Bhaker delivered a sensational double-podium finish in the Women’s 25m Pistol event at the ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun event, clinching the gold and bronze medals, respectively, to extend In-



dia’s stellar run at the competition. Esha produced a commanding display in the final, registering 40 hits to seal the gold medal, while Paris 2024 double Olympic medalist Manu Bhaker fought through a tense, highly competitive field, winning a crucial shoot-off before finishing with 28 hits to secure bronze, as per a press release from the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI). The Indian squad set the benchmark early in the qualification round. Manu Bhaker topped the qualifying standings with an outstanding score of 586-20x, closely followed by Esha Singh in second place with 585-18x to comfortably advance to the eight-shooter final. Former Asian Games Gold Medalist Rahi Sarnobat posted 582-16x, while Simranpreet Kaur Brar (576-20x) and Abhidnya Ashok Patil

(573-16x) delivered steady performances competing under Ranking Points Only (RPO) status. Esha Singh, a 21-year-old from Hyderabad, has achieved yet another significant milestone in his career with the gold medal. Esha made history earlier this season at the ISSF World Cup in Munich by setting the world records for both the senior and junior divisions with 43 hits in the championship match. Esha, an Olympian from Paris in 2024 and recipient of the Arjuna Award, is still making a name for herself among the world’s best. After her historic Olympic campaign in Paris 2024, when she became the first athlete from independent India to win two medals at a single Games, Manu Bhaker views the bronze medal as more evidence of her incredible consistency on the international scene.

“Normal Situation” JP Nadda Over Police Arresting Student Leader at CPM Office



New Delhi, July 29: On Wednesday, Union Minister JP Nadda called the police raid on the Communist Party of India (Marxist) headquarters in Delhi on Tuesday a “normal law and order situation” and said that the opposition was “politicising and sensationalising” the police operation. On Wednesday, CPM Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas brought up the police raid at the party headquarters in the House. In an earlier instance, a Delhi Police squad

reportedly tried to arrest Aishe Ghosh, the Delhi Secretary of the CPM Student Wing SFI and former president of the JNU Students’ Union, on Tuesday at the party’s AKG Bhavan headquarters. The police team departed AKG Bhavan without Aishe Ghosh after the police action sparked a dispute between the police and the CPM officials. “It was a very normal law and order situation that we have to understand. Police acted to maintain the order,” Nadda

said in the Rajya Sabha, adding that “any student who is into activism will have to face such a situation.” The Union Minister then went to draw an Emergency parallel and gave example of how he too was arrested several times when he was a student activist. “I have been a student activist and I was arrested several times from the classroom during the Emergency under Congress rule,” he pointed out. Nadda asserted that the “police acted according to the law and order situation” and opposition should not politicise it. “The Opposition is trying to sensationalise and politicise a law and order activity by the policy,” Nadda said. CPM leaders alleged that the police action was connected to Ghosh’s participation in a recent student protest at Jantar Mantar organised by the Cockroach Janta Party. The party claimed that the police is using an old case to take action against a student leader after her involvement in the recent protests.

Protest by Generation Z “Took Us By Surprise” Delhi BJP Expands Its Outreach to Youth

New Delhi, July 29: According to insiders, the Delhi BJP has made the decision to engage young voters more actively after internal feedback suggested that the party needs to address problems pertaining to youth. The action comes as a top party official admitted that the organization was “somewhat taken by surprise” by the recent Gen Z-led demonstration at Jantar Mantar. The Delhi BJP’s media chief, Praveen Shankar Kapoor, stated, “We will now step up our outreach and interact with the youth more actively.” The Delhi BJP’s state organization, party MLAs and ministers, and youth and student associations will all be involved in the outreach, according to party sources. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, or ABVP, will play a significant role at colleges and institutions around the nation’s capital, while the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, or BJYM, is anticipated to be given more authority. We Were Surprised by Movement. According to Kapoor, the BJP has continuously tried to include younger leaders in its administrations and organization. He mentioned the selection of younger politicians to important party posts and the promotion of former Delhi University Students’ Union office-bearers to major positions in the Delhi administration. The party also has age limits for certain organisational posts, he said. A Mandal president must be below the age of 45, while a Yuva Morcha president must be 40 or younger. However, Kapoor acknowledged that the recent student mobilisation had prompted the party to accelerate its outreach. “To be completely honest, this student movement did take us somewhat by surprise,” he said. “A political party must always be prepared to connect with the next generation. This movement has encouraged us to move even faster,” he added. No specific targets have been set and individual responsibilities have not yet been assigned, Kapoor said. The Yuva Morcha, however, will be given a larger role in the outreach. The party began stepping up its engagement soon after the Jantar Mantar protest ended, according to Kapoor. He said Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra listened to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Mann Ki Baat programme with Yuva Morcha workers the following morning. Malhotra later held an interaction with students from Delhi University and other educational institutions in the city. Kapoor said nearly 100 students attended the interaction. Among which, the number of participating students was around 50, along with some parents who accompanied them. The programme, titled “Yuva Samvad: Gen-Z with Modi”, included discussions on higher education, curriculum changes and issues related to nation-building, according to the party. Participants also discussed the Jantar Mantar protest. The BJP claimed that some students criticised the protest and alleged that objectionable remarks had been made



during the demonstration. At the interaction, Malhotra highlighted the expansion of medical institutions and education seats under the Narendra Modi government since 2014. He said programmes such as Yuva Samvad gave young people a platform to express their views and contribute to conversations on national development. “Today’s younger generation is aware and wants to express its views on every issue based on facts and reasoning,” Malhotra said at the event. Sources said the Delhi BJP’s youth push would not be confined to programmes organised by its state leadership. Party MLAs and ministers are also expected to increase their interactions with young people, while the BJYM and student organisations will focus on colleges and universities. The strategy is still being developed, and no formal calendar or measurable targets have been finalised. The immediate objective, sources said, is to create more opportunities for direct conversations with students and young voters and to respond more quickly to issues emerging on campuses. Kapoor said the BJP had always believed in moving forward “hand in hand with the younger generation”, but accepted that the Jantar Mantar mobilisation had underlined the need for more active engagement. The start of the new academic year at Delhi University coincides with the intensified emphasis on young voters. The ABVP began its “Welcome Freshers” campaign in DU campuses on Tuesday. According to an ABVP official, the program will last for a week and cover many colleges around the institution. According to the official, ABVP employees would greet and support recently accepted students as well as inform them about government plans and educational reforms. The campaign will also introduce students to ABVP programmes involving social service, innovation, cultural activities, sports and personal-

ity development. These include Students for Seva, Students for Development, Rashtriya Kala Manch and Khelo Bharat. On the first day of the academic session, ABVP volunteers welcomed students with tilak, flower petals and sweets and set up help desks to assist them and their parents. According to the student organisation, volunteers helped freshers with document verification, class schedules, orientation programmes, departmental information and directions to classrooms. Students arriving from outside Delhi were also offered guidance on accommodation, transport and other local arrangements. ABVP Delhi state secretary Sarthak Sharma said the organisation wanted new students to feel supported from the beginning of their university life. “Our primary objective is to stay connected with students, understand their concerns and work consistently for their academic interests and holistic development,” Sharma said. ABVP’s engagement with students continued throughout the year and was not restricted to a particular protest or event. “With regard to the Jantar Mantar protest, it would be incorrect to conclude that our campus outreach increased or decreased because of that movement,” he said. The organisation’s programmes follow a year-round calendar covering student welfare, educational reforms, academic concerns and campus development, he added. The week-long freshers’ drive will combine student assistance with discussions on education reforms and opportunities for participation in ABVP’s campus initiatives. For the Delhi BJP, the larger objective is to expand direct engagement with young people through its political and student networks and remain more closely connected to the issues shaping conversations among Gen Z voters. But will it translate into a deeper and lasting connection with Delhi’s young voters?

Geneva will host the World Chess Championship match between D Gukesh and Javokhir Sindarov



Geneva: From November 25 to December 15, the FIDE World Championship Match 2026 between defending champion Gukesh D and challenger Javokhir Sindarov will take place in Geneva, Switzerland. When the event starts, Gukesh of India and Sindarov of Uzbekistan will both be under 20 years old, making it the youngest World Championship match ever. With two of the game’s brightest young

stars competing for its largest prize after coming from an era dominated by seasoned champions, the match also marks a generational transition in international chess. Viswanathan Anand, interim president of FIDE, applauded the announcement. “Several countries expressed a strong interest in hosting the FIDE World Championship Match, including India, the United States and Cyprus,” said Anand. The World Championship match will be contested over 14 classical games, with the first player to reach 7.5 points crowned world champion. If either player reaches the winning mark before all 14 games are completed, the remaining games will not be played. However, if the score is tied 7-7 at the end of the classical portion, the title will be decided through a series of tiebreak games, ensuring a definitive winner. “After carefully considering all the proposals, FIDE has decided to stage the match on neutral soil and bring it to Geneva, a city with a historic tradi-

tion of bringing nations and cultures together,” said Anand, the five-time world champion. “We look forward to welcoming the global chess community to Switzerland. The local chess fans will have the opportunity to experience world-class chess in person, while millions of fans around the globe can follow the battle online as the duel for the highest title in chess unfolds,” he added. As reigning champion, Gukesh will defend the crown he won in Singapore in December 2024. At the age of 18, he defeated China’s Ding Liren, securing victory in the 14th and final classical game to become the 18th World Champion and the youngest player ever to hold the title. Sindarov won the FIDE Candidates Tournament 2026 in Cyprus, earning him a chance to run for the title. The Uzbek general manager added another significant accomplishment to his success at the 2025 FIDE World Cup by securing first position with one round remaining.

Bizarre ‘Clicky Ponting’ Finger-Snapping Scandal Leaves Cricket World In Shock



New Delhi: A bizarre cheating allegation in English club cricket has turned an amateur player into an unlikely viral sensation. Nicknamed “Clicky Ponting”, the fielder is accused of clicking his fingers to trick umpires into believing batters had edged the ball.

The controversy has struck a chord because matches in England’s club cricket leagues are played without technology such as DRS or Snickometer. Unlike the international game, where replays and audio technology help determine whether the ball has brushed the bat,

umpires in these community-run competitions rely entirely on what they see and hear on the field. With no video reviews available, trust between players and officials remains central to the game, making the allegations particularly serious. The North Yorkshire and South Durham Cricket League launched an investigation after videos circulating online appeared to show Saltburn Cricket Club fielder Brian Devine, stationed at slip or silly point, clicking his fingers as the ball passed the bat before the wicketkeeper completed the

catch. The alleged tactic earned him the nickname “Clicky Ponting” – a play on Australian great Ricky Ponting, and quickly became one of cricket’s most talked-about stories. Speaking after the controversy erupted, the league confirmed it had begun a formal probe into the matter. “The League have received a formal complaint regarding alleged incidents in a Division Two game on Saturday 25th July 2026. A full investigation has been initiated and until such time as the formal processes are complete no further comment will be made.” The player at the centre of the allegations has since been identified by the English media as veteran club cricketer Brian Devine. The company secretary and director of a livestock auction business declined to discuss the controversy when approached by the Daily Mail. “Naturally I can’t comment on that.” What began as a local club cricket controversy quickly snowballed into a global talking point. Videos showing the alleged finger-clicking tactic spread rapidly across social media, earning Devine the nickname “Clicky Ponting” – a play on the name of former Australia captain Ricky Ponting. The alleged deception involved Devine, fielding at slip or silly point, clicking his fingers just as the ball passed the bat to create the sound of an edge before the wicketkeeper completed the catch.

Gukesh Defends World Chess Championship Crown Against Challenger Sindarov In Geneva

New Delhi: India’s D Gukesh will defend his World Chess Championship title against Uzbekistan’s Javokhir Sindarov in Geneva, Switzerland, with the 2026 title match scheduled from November 25 to December 15, the International Chess Federation (FIDE) announced on Tuesday. The contest will be the youngest World Championship match in history, with both Gukesh and Sindarov set to be 20 years old when play begins. It also reflects a changing of the guard in world chess, as two of the game’s brightest young stars compete for its biggest prize following an era dominated by experienced champions. The World Championship will be played over 14 classical games, with the first player to reach 7.5 points crowned champion. If neither player reaches that mark and the score is tied at 7-7, the title will be decided through a series of tie-break games. FIDE Interim President Viswanathan Anand said several countries, including India, the United States, and Cyprus, had expressed interest in hosting the event before Geneva was selected. Several countries expressed a strong interest in hosting the FIDE World Championship Match, including India, the United States and Cyprus,” Anand said. “After carefully considering all the proposals, FIDE has decided to stage the match on neutral soil and bring it to Geneva, a city



with a historic tradition of bringing nations and cultures together. “We look forward to welcoming the global chess community to Switzerland. Local chess fans will have the opportunity to experience world-class chess in person, while millions around the globe can follow the battle online as the duel for the highest title in chess unfolds,” he added. Gukesh will enter the match as the reigning world champion after scripting history in Singapore in December 2024. The Indian Grandmaster defeated China’s Ding Liren in the 14th and final classical game to become the 18th World Champion and the youngest player ever to win the coveted title at the age of 18.

Sindarov earned the right to challenge Gukesh after winning the 2026 FIDE Candidates Tournament in Cyprus. The Uzbek Grandmaster sealed first place with a round to spare, building on the momentum from his triumph at the 2025 FIDE World Cup. The Geneva showdown promises a compelling contest between two of the leading faces of chess’s new generation. India’s D Gukesh will defend his World Chess Championship title against Uzbekistan’s Javokhir Sindarov in Geneva from November 25 to December 15, 2026. Both 20, they represent a new generation in chess. The 14-game match awards the title to the first with 7.5 points, with tie-breaks if needed.

How A Single Simple Instruction Helped Gulveer Singh Script Commonwealth Games History

Glasgow: Long-distance runner Gulveer Singh revealed that a simple instruction from coach Scott Simmons helped him script history after becoming the first Indian man to win a medal in the 10,000m at the Commonwealth Games. Trusting the race plan to perfection, the national record holder clinched a historic silver medal in Glasgow on Tuesday. Gulveer clocked 27:49.8 to finish behind Australia’s Ky Robinson (27:48.93) at Scotstoun Stadium, while David Mullarkey of the Isle of Man claimed bronze.

Speaking to reporters after the race, Gulveer said the race had unfolded exactly the way his coach had planned it, with one clear instruction dictating every move he made on the track. “My coach told me not to do anything special. He asked me to stay behind the leaders, follow the pace and then give everything in the final 400 metres. The



coach said the medal would be decided by speed in the closing stages, so I had to stay with the group and then make my move at the end.” The strategy demanded immense patience against a quality field featuring multiple African runners and 2023 World Championships silver medallist Daniel Ekenyo. Rather than responding to every surge, Gulveer stuck to Simmons’ blueprint before producing a perfectly timed finishing kick in the closing stages. “My only strategy was to win a medal for the

country. At one point, things became a little difficult because the pace kept changing. But everything worked out in the end. It was all by God’s grace.” Gulveer’s silver was India’s first-ever medal in the men’s 10,000m at the Commonwealth Games and only the second by an Indian in the event after Kavita Raut won bronze in the women’s race at the 2010 Delhi Games.

The race itself was a lesson in discipline. Gulveer settled into the leading pack early and stayed among the

front-runners through the opening 4,000 metres before slipping to ninth around the 5,600m mark as the pace began to fluctuate. Instead of abandoning the plan, he resisted the urge to chase every move, gradually climbed back into contention and remained within touching distance of the leaders heading into the final five laps. With 1,000 metres remaining, the Indian moved into bronze-medal position before drawing level with Mullarkey.

True to Simmons’ pre-race instructions, Gulveer unleashed his strongest burst in the closing stages, surging past the Isle of Man runner in the final 200 metres to secure silver, finishing less than a second behind Robinson. The medal-winning run was another example of the consistency Gulveer has shown since moving to the United States to train under Simmons in Colorado.

R Ashwin Endorses Saransh Jain Ahead Of His India Test Debut Against Sri Lanka

New Delhi: Saransh Jain’s maiden India Test call-up may have been years in the making, but one of the country’s greatest off-spinners believes the Madhya Pradesh all-rounder has earned every bit of it. Former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who has closely followed Jain’s rise in domestic cricket, said he hopes the 33-year-old gets the opportunity to prove himself at the highest level. India named Jain in their 15-member squad for the two-Test series against Sri Lanka on Tuesday, rewarding a decade of consistent domestic performances. Speaking on his YouTube show Ash Ki Baat, Ashwin said Jain possesses the qualities needed to succeed in Test cricket, even if competition for places could delay his debut. “I am very happy for him. I have seen him. I think very highly of him. He bowls wide off the crease. He attacks. He is a different type of off-spinner. His job is to take wickets. He has done a very commendable job.”

Ashwin also acknowledged that breaking into India’s playing XI would not be straightforward, with Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Manav Suthar expected to be among the spin options. However, he backed Jain to grab his chance whenever it comes. “I hope he gets a chance. Manav will play. Jadeja and Kuldeep will



play, so he might have to sit out too. But I really hope because he has it in him to perform.” Jain’s selection comes at a crucial time, with Washington Sundar included in the squad subject to fitness clearance as he recovers from a hamstring injury. The selectors opted for the experienced off-spinning all-rounder after he impressed on the recent India A tour of Sri Lanka, claiming six wickets across two matches and scoring an unbeaten 70 in conditions similar to those expected in the Test series. Born in Indore, Jain has quietly built one of the strongest domestic records among India’s all-rounders since making his first-class

debut for Madhya Pradesh in the 2014-15 season. Across 54 first-class matches, he has scored more than 2,000 runs at an average of 31.75 while picking up 188 wickets at 27.30. His rise has been driven by consistency rather than headline-grabbing performances. Jain played a pivotal role in Madhya Pradesh’s maiden Ranji Trophy triumph in 2022, before enjoying back-to-back outstanding domestic seasons that earned him the Lala Amarnath Award as the country’s best all-rounder. He also finished as the Player of the Series in the 2025 Duleep Trophy after taking 16 wickets to guide Central Zone to the title.

Rudiger Considered Germany Retirement As International Future Remains Unclear

Berlin: Germany and Real Madrid centre-back Antonio Rudiger considered retirement from international football after the four-time champions’ shocking round of 32 exit in the recently concluded FIFA World Cup; however, he has not made any official decision yet. As per a report from Sports Bild as quoted by Goal.com, Rudiger could now change his mind after the tournament. The 33-year-old is keeping his options open, whether to retire following manager Julian Nagelsmann’s resignation and the appointment of Jurgen Klopp to the post or continue wearing the national shirt. Also, whether Klopp wants to rely on the Real Madrid star is unclear, with the new head coach wanting to gradually call up current international players and the players he has taken a look at and inform them of his plans.

The process, as per the report, has just started now, and the players who want to retire have so far held themselves back from making any statement about their international future. During the FIFA WC, Rudiger was the third-choice centre-back behind the es-



tablished duo of Jonathan Tah and Nico Schlotterbeck. When Nico suffered an injury during the second group stage game against Ivory Coast and had to be ruled out of the competition, Rudiger was a starter in the final group stage match against Ecuador and the group stage match against Paraguay, both of which Germany lost. Since his debut in 2014, the footballer has earned 86 national caps so far. For Klopp, the question if the 33-year-old is still a part of

his core, remains. During his introductory presser on being appointed as the head coach, the German hinted that he wants to carry out a personnel overhaul and opened the door to newcomers. Alongside Tah and Schlotterbeck, who are likely to solidify their places under Klopp, several young centre-backs are also there who could be a part of the rebuild, such as Malick Thiaw (Newcastle United), Finn Jeltsch (VfB Stuttgart) and Yann Bisseck (Inter Milan).

Rudiger still has a chance, as Klopp is still unclear on the experienced legs that he still wants in the squad to help build Germany’s future. Since his international debut in 2014, Rudiger has made consistent appearances for the national side. But before Euro 2016, he suffered a cruciate ligament rupture and had to watch the competition from the sidelines. He was a part of the FIFA Confederations Cup triumph in 2017, but at the major tournaments, his track

record has largely been disappointing, with group-stage exits at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, a last-16 exit at Euro 2021, a quarter-final at Euro 2024 and now a round-of-32 exit at the 2026 World Cup. Klopp will be naming his first squad as a Germany head coach in September for the UEFA Nations League and will be making his debut against the Netherlands. Three days later, Klopp will play his first home game in Augsburg against Greece.

Indian Boxing Trio Assures Three Medals At CWG 2026

New Delhi: India’s young boxing brigade continued its impressive run at the Commonwealth Games on Tuesday as reigning Asian champion Priya Ghanghas, Asian Games bronze medallist Preeti Pawar and Jadumani Singh won their quarterfinal bouts to assure the country of three more medals in Glasgow. It wasn’t a clean sweep across the board, though: Parveen Hooda and heavyweight Kapil Pokhariya both crashed out in the last eight. Priya (60kg) fought back from a first-round deficit to beat Scotland’s Niamh Mitchell 4-1 in front of a partisan home crowd, Preeti (54kg) outclassed Northern Ireland’s Nicole Clyde 5-0, while Jadumani (55kg) defeated Zambia’s Mwengo Mwale by unanimous decision to book their places in the semifinals. With boxing’s two losing semifinalists guaranteed bronze medals, the trio moved within one win of a place in their respective finals. The standout fight of the day came in the women’s 60kg quarterfinal, where Priya pulled off a gritty comeback win against Scotland’s Niamh Mitchell, despite the heavily partisan local crowd cheering against her. The 20-year-old from Haryana traded blows



blow-for-blow with Mitchell in the opening round, but ended up trailing after four of the five judges scored it for the Scot. Rather than letting the deficit or the loud atmosphere rattle her, Priya turned up the heat in the second round. She constantly marched forward, putting Mitchell on the back foot with relentless pressure and clean combinations. It was a scrappy round that saw both boxers docked a point: Priya for repeatedly dipping her head too low, and Mitchell for constantly clinching to slow down the Indian’s pace. The penalties didn’t derail Priya’s momentum. She took the second round 4-1 on the scorecards, setting up a tense final round. With a medal on the line, Priya stayed cool under pressure, landing the clearer, harder shots to clinch a memorable split-decision victory.

The judges scored the bout 28-27, 28-27, 27-28, 28-27, and 29-26 in her favor.

After the fight, a smiling Priya captured the moment perfectly: “Yehi toh feeling hai, Scotland mein Scotland ko haraana.” (That’s the feeling, beating Scotland in Scotland.) While Priya had to dig deep, Preeti Pawar had a much easier time in her 54kg quarterfinal against Northern Ireland’s Nicole Clyde, a fighter she actually sparred with during India’s prep camp in Belfast ahead of the Games. Giving up a height advantage, the 22-year-old completely controlled the distance using her quick footwork and sharp punch selection. She repeatedly cracked through Clyde’s guard with crisp combinations to take the opening round, with four judges scoring it 10-9 and one giving her a 10-8 edge.