

Mizoram ACB's first annual report records 112 convictions; CM calls for collective action

Aizawl, Jul 03: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhma on Thursday called for collective efforts to combat corruption, saying the challenge cannot be tackled by a single agency and requires the participation of both citizens and government employees. Speaking at the release of the first annual report of the state's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Lalduhma described corruption as a major impediment to good governance and the overall development of the state.

He said the government had strengthened both the ACB and the Mizoram Lokayukta to enhance the state's anti-corruption



framework and expressed hope that the two institutions would continue to build their professional ca-

pabilities.

The Chief Minister said the annual report should serve as a reminder to gov-

ernment employees of the need to discharge their duties with integrity, account-ability, transparency and

financial propriety.

According to the report, the ACB received 17 corruption-related complaints during 2025-26, of which 15 were taken up for preliminary enquiry, leading to the registration of six regular cases. The Bureau completed 14 preliminary enquiries, including cases carried forward from previous years, and disposed of seven regular cases during the period. The report also stated that between 2010 and 2026, the ACB secured the conviction of 112 persons in 35 corruption cases that were charge-sheeted and tried by the Special Court under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Churachandpur Police Bust Drug Syndicate, Seize Cash, Brown Sugar

Imphal, Jul 03: In a major breakthrough against inter-state narcotics trafficking, a specialized team of the Churachandpur District Police has successfully dismantled an organized drug syndicate, resulting in the arrest of key operators and the recovery of a substantial cache of illegal substances and illicit currency.

The coordinated anti-narcotics operation led to the seizure of a high-purity consignment of brown sugar alongside ₹31,00,000 in cash, suspected to be the direct proceeds of localized drug sales. Acting on precise intelligence inputs regarding the movement of a major consignment, district police personnel intercepted a suspected vehicle and raided a designated transit hideout in the district. During



the intensive search, security forces uncovered the contraband brown sugar, carefully packaged for commercial distribution, alongside the hidden cash stack consisting entirely of high-denomination currency notes. A senior district police official stated that initial investigations point toward an active network responsible for sourcing raw mate-

rials and distributing refined contraband across regional borders. The sheer volume of cash seized underscores the deep financial network of the syndicate and its capacity to fund large-scale illicit trade in the border region. A formal case has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at the local police station.

Nalbari Administration Issues 15-Day Notice Ahead of Fresh Eviction Drive



Nalbari, July 03: The Nalbari district administration has begun preparations for a fresh eviction drive in the Barkhetri Revenue Circle by issuing a 15-day notice to more than 150 families allegedly occupying around 322 bighas of government grazing land in Velakhaiti, Sabhamari and Baramara villages.

According to an official notice issued by the Barkhetri Revenue Circle Office, the administration has directed the removal of alleged encroachments from Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) land. The notice states that around 286

bighas of the 870 bighas, 1 katha and 15 lechas of grazing land under Dag No. 212 at Velakhaiti are under alleged illegal occupation. It also identifies 12 bighas under Dag No. 46 at Sabhamari and 24 bighas under Dag No. 93 at Baramara as encroached, taking the total land proposed for eviction to nearly 322 bighas. The administration cited the Supreme Court's January 20, 2011 judgment in Civil Appeal No. 1132/2011 arising out of SLP (C) No. 3109/2011, which mandates the removal of illegal encroachments from government land.

Slow Expansion Work At Umroi Airport Continues To Hit Passengers Hard

Shillong, Jul 03: For thousands of commuters in Meghalaya, catching a flight has deteriorated into an exhausting, time-consuming, and expensive ordeal. Ongoing regulatory stagnation surrounding the expansion of the Shillong Airport at Umroi is gradually pushing the state into an isolated corner, while neighboring northeastern states enjoy seamless national connectivity.

The persistent delay in upgrading the airport infrastructure has drastically shrunk direct connectivity within the Northeast and shattered hopes of establishing new routes to major metropolitan hubs. Students rushing for university admissions, patients requiring urgent out-of-state medical referrals, traders, and tourists are now routinely forced to factor in massive logistical hurdles, extra monetary costs, and lost hours—all



because critical airport expansion files remain stuck in bureaucratic loops. With direct local options severely restricted, travelers are left with no choice but to head to Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati, Assam—located nearly 140 kilometers away. The added time, high vehicle rental costs, and sheer fatigue of this grueling road journey have become a heavy, recurring burden for the public. The crisis is heavily com-

pounded by a standstill in physical construction at the site. While the Meghalaya state government swiftly resolved complex land acquisition bottlenecks—successfully handing over 22.5 acres of private and defense land to the Airports Authority of India (AAI)—and the Ministry of Environment cleared environmental permits on March 28, the final execution phase remains stalled. The project was formally awarded to M/s KCC Buildcon Pvt Ltd on

April 1 with a strict 18-month completion timeline, yet heavy machinery cannot move because the final safety assessment clearance for the execution stage has been pending. The administrative delay recently drew heavy fire from the High Court of Meghalaya. A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice Wanlura Diengdoh pulled up the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for sitting on vital safety clearances, warning that the 45-day delay would inevitably trigger project cost escalations, forcing taxpayers to foot a higher bill. In the latest judicial hearing, Deputy Solicitor General Nitesh Mozika informed the court that the DGCA has now expedited the vetting process, and the central authorities have been granted a brief window to formally submit the safety evaluation report.

HC orders review, rejects bias

Agartala, Jul 03: The Tripura High Court has directed the state government to reconsider the promotion of a woman Jailor to the post of Deputy Superintendent (Home) Jail, ruling that gender cannot be a valid ground to deny career advancement when the applicable recruitment rules make no distinction between male and female officers. Justice Biswajit Palit allowed the writ petition and set aside a May 1, 2025 communication issued by the Inspector General of Prisons rejecting the officer's claim for promotion. The court held that the decision was legally unsustainable and directed the competent authority to reassess her case within three months, provided she satisfies all prescribed eligibility criteria.

Large-scale eviction drive underway in Assam's Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary

Guwahati, Jul 03: A major eviction drive is in progress at the Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam's Nagaon district, as authorities remove alleged encroachments from a large stretch of protected forest land. According to local sources, the operation is focused on vast stretches of jute cultivation that officials claim have been carried out illegally within the sanctuary's notified forest area.

The eviction has triggered tension in the locality after residents alleged that a man who had gone to graze his cattle earlier in the day was assaulted by forest personnel. The claim could not be independently verified, and the Forest Department has not issued any official statement on the matter. Forest officials have stated that the eviction is part of a broader initiative to restore degraded habitats and safeguard bio-



diversity within the sanctuary. Laokhowa, known for its rich wildlife including rhinos, wild buffalo, and migratory birds, has faced increasing pressure from human activity and cultivation in recent years. The drive has triggered tension in surrounding villages after residents alleged that a man grazing his cattle earlier in

the day was assaulted by forest personnel. The claim could not be independently verified, and the Forest Department has not issued any official statement on the matter. Community members have expressed concern over the manner of the operation, urging authorities to ensure that local livelihoods are not disrupted without due

process. Local organizations have begun mobilizing to demand clarity on the eviction process, calling for transparent communication from the Forest Department. District officials have indicated that the operation is being conducted under legal provisions protecting wildlife sanctuaries, but have yet to address allegations of excesses.

Ramakrishna Mission plans to set up two higher education institutes in Arunachal Pradesh

Itanagar, Jul 03: Arunachal Pradesh is set to get two new institutes of higher education as the Ramakrishna Mission plans to establish campuses at Aalo and Narottam Nagar, a move Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday described as a major boost to quality higher education and value-based learning in the state. The proposed institutions will come up at Aalo in West Siang district and Narottam Nagar in Tirap district, expanding educational opportunities for students across the state.

Khandu announced the development in a post on X after holding discussions with a delegation of the Ramakrishna Mission led by its Assistant General Secretary, Swami Bodhasarananda. "We had a fruitful discussion with a delegation from the Ramakrishna Mission led by Revered Swami Bodhasarananda Ji. The meeting focused on the establishment of Institutes



of Higher Education at Aalo and Narottam Nagar, which will mark a significant step towards expanding quality higher education opportunities in Arunachal Pradesh," the chief minister said. He noted that the Ramakrishna Mission has made invaluable contributions to education and social service in Arunachal Pradesh over the years and said the proposed institutes would further strengthen the state's higher education

ecosystem. Reaffirming the government's commitment to improving educational infrastructure, Khandu said the state would continue to collaborate with reputed institutions to widen access to quality education and create better academic opportunities for students. The chief minister expressed confidence that the new institutions would not only provide quality higher education within the state but also help develop skilled,

socially responsible and value-driven young citizens. Reaffirming the government's commitment to improving educational infrastructure, Khandu said the state would continue to collaborate with reputed institutions to widen access to quality education. He emphasized that the new institutes would not only provide opportunities within the state but also reduce the need for students to migrate outside Arunachal for higher studies.

SC refuses to stay Sonam Raghuvanshi's bail, seeks response on state's plea

Shillong, July 03: The Supreme Court on Friday declined to stay the bail granted to Sonam Raghuvanshi, the prime accused in the alleged murder of her husband, Raja Raghuvanshi, during their honeymoon in Meghalaya. However, the court agreed to examine the

Meghalaya government's challenge to the bail order. A Bench of the apex court noted that while it had certain reservations about aspects of the Meghalaya High Court's ruling, Sonam had already been released on bail. It therefore refused to pass any interim

order staying her release, but issued notice to her and sought her response to the state's appeal. The matter will be heard further once her reply is filed.

Sonam is accused of conspiring to kill her husband during their trip to Sohra, Meghalaya, in May 2025.



According to the prosecution, she allegedly hired contract killers to carry out

the murder. Raja Raghuvanshi's body was later recovered from a gorge, leading to a high-profile investigation by the Meghalaya Police. She and several others were subsequently arrested, though she has denied the allegations.

The Meghalaya govern-

ment has challenged the June 29 order of the High Court, which upheld a Shillong trial court's decision granting bail to Sonam. The High Court had pointed to procedural lapses in the arrest records, including an incorrect reference to the penal provision in the

arrest memo and held that these defects affected the legality of the arrest. The state, however, has argued that the error was merely clerical and should not outweigh the seriousness of the charges.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta

urged the Supreme Court to stay the bail, arguing that the High Court had given undue weight to a technical defect despite strong evidence in the case. The apex court, however, declined to interfere at this stage, noting that Sonam was already out on bail.

Rahul criticizes the Central Government following the arson of houses in Manipur

Imphal, July 03: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday lashed out at the Centre over the incidents of torching of several houses in two tribal villages in Manipur, saying it is the result of the Modi government’s “divisive ideology”.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said Manipur has been burning for years, and again, 20 homes have been reduced to ashes in the fire of hatred and violence.

“Even with two governments and President’s rule, the conflict is only deepening. Thousands have lost their lives, countless families have been shattered—the unbearable agony Manipur is enduring is hard even to imagine,” Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

“This is the result of the Modi government’s divisive ideology, which divides people in the name of religion, caste, language, region, and identity. Today, not just Manipur but the entire country has given up hope of even two words of empathy from the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), let alone any action,” the former Congress chief said.

Manipur deserves better—and for that, uniting India is the only way forward, Gandhi asserted.

Rahul Gandhi blames Centre fresh Manipur

Guwahati, July 03: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on July 2 criticised the Centre over the torching of houses in two tribal villages in Manipur’s Kamjong district, alleging that the violence reflects the Modi government’s “divisive ideology”.The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha said the northeastern state has remained trapped in violence for years and that the latest attacks showed the situation continued to deteriorate despite President’s Rule. Targeting the Centre, Gandhi alleged that the unrest was “the result of the Modi government’s divisive ideology”, accusing it of dividing people on the basis of religion, caste, language, region and identity. He also claimed that people across the country had “given up hope of even two words of empathy from the Prime Minister”, adding that “Manipur deserves better” and that uniting the country was the only way forward.

His remarks came after armed militants torched several houses in at least two tribal villages in Manipur’s Kamjong district near the India-Myanmar border on Wednesday, officials said.

Around 10 thatched houses were set ablaze at Phaimol village, a Kuki-Zo settlement. The village is located about 45 km northeast of Chassad police station near the international border, they said. Officials said villagers were not present at the time of the incident as they had been taking temporary shelter in a nearby village for over a week.

The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of the Kuki community in the state, strongly condemned the arson and claimed the attacks were carried out by outfits operating from across the border in Myanmar.

In a separate incident, suspected to be a retaliatory attack, militants also torched around eight houses in Kongkan Thana and adjoining areas inhabited by the Tangkhul Naga community in the same district near the international border. Phungyar MLA Leishiyi Keishing said at least 12 houses belonging to the Tangkhul Naga community in Kongkan Thana were set on fire.

Manipur CM Khemchand Singh Inaugurates Bio-Fertilizer Unit

Shillong, July 03: Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said the initiative would strengthen organic farming, promote the use of bio-fertilizers, and empower farmers through sustainable agricultural practices. He said the project would also encourage innovation in the agriculture sector, facilitate technology transfer to local micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), conserve indigenous bio-resources, and create new skill and employment opportunities for the youth of Manipur.Khemchand Singh said the initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, aimed at building a self-reliant and prosperous India through sustainable development and agricultural innovation. Later in the day, the Chief Minister attended the State-Level Launch of the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika

Mission (VB-GRAM G) at Salam Tharoi-jam Eco Tourism Park. The programme was virtually launched by Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Highlighting the significance of the mission, the Chief Minister said the flagship initiative guarantees 125 days of wage employment to every eligible rural worker, strengthening rural livelihoods and accelerating inclusive development across the state. Hall, New Civil Secretariat, Mantripukhri, with senior officials. The meeting reviewed the functioning of the National Health Mission (NHM), the Directorate of Medical Education, Family Welfare, AYUSH, and Health Services. Discussions focused on the 2026–27 work plan, addressing infrastructure and specialist shortages, while reaffirming the government’s commitment to strengthening healthcare delivery across Manipur.

The flood situation in Assam has shown signs 25,000 individuals continue to be impacted

Guwahati, July 03: The flood situation in Assam improved on Thursday, with the number of affected people dropping to over 25,000 across two districts, according to an official bulletin.

The daily flood bulletin issued by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said nearly 25,100 people remain affected in Dhemaji and Dibrugarh districts.

Dhemaji is the worst-hit district, with more than 21,000 people affected, followed by Dibrugarh, where nearly 4,000 people continue to reel under floodwaters.

On Wednesday, more than 48,000 people across



four districts were affected by the floods.

The flood-related death toll in the state this year remained unchanged at one. The ASDMA said four relief camps and relief distribution centres are being operated in the two affected districts, where

129 displaced people are currently taking shelter.

During the past 24 hours, the authorities distributed 82.26 quintals of rice, 15.2 quintals of dal, 4.56 quintals of salt and 294.9 litres of mustard oil among flood-affected people. According to the bulletin, 52 villages remain inundated, while floods have damaged crops spread over 393.44 hectares across the state.

Floodwaters have also damaged embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure in several districts. The ASDMA said more than 55,000 domestic animals and poultry have also been affected by the flooding across the state.

Arunachal’s April Blossom Foundation Best School

Itanagar, July 03: April Blossom Foundation, a school for children with special needs located at Lekhi Village in Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh, has been honoured with the Best School Award at the SA Indian School Awards. The award was presented by renowned Indian boxer Mary Kom in recognition of the institution’s outstanding contribution to special education.

For the past five years, the foundation has been providing free education and a range of therapeutic interventions for children with special needs, helping them develop essential life skills and achieve their full potential. Through its dedicated early intervention programmes, many children with autism have shown significant progress, with several successfully transitioning into mainstream schools after receiving therapy and support at the foundation. Committed to inclusive education and community service, April Blossom Foundation continues to make a meaningful impact by offering quality education, therapy and care to children with special needs and their families at no cost.

Edn infra essential to improving learning outcomes CM

Shillong, July 03: Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Thursday inaugurated the Meghalaya Teacher Training Academy and a new boarding facility at Pine Mount School, saying sustained investments in teacher training and educational infrastructure are essential to improving learning outcomes in the state.

Inaugurating the MTTA in the presence of Education Minister Lakhmen Rymbui, Sangma said the academy marked the beginning of a long-term effort to build a robust teacher development ecosystem rather than merely adding another government institution.

“This is not merely about infrastructure; it is about creating a system that will strengthen the foundation of education in Meghalaya. This academy will play a crucial role in addressing long-standing gaps, especially in teacher training,” he said.

The academy has been established as an autonomous statutory body to provide continuous professional development for teachers through a decentralised ‘hub-and-spoke’ model linking it with District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs).

The chief minister said the government had moved away from fragmented training programmes to a structured capacity-building framework after national assessments highlighted gaps in learning outcomes and teacher development. Describing education reform as a gradual process,



Conrad K Sangma launched the Meghalaya Teacher Training Academy, the She Thrives initiative and a new boarding facility at Pine Mount School. He said teacher development, girls’ dignity and entrepreneurship must shape Meghalaya’s education reforms.

Sangma said, “Education is like a tangled thread; if you pull one knot too hard, others tighten. We must patiently untangle each knot, step by step.”

He also highlighted the government’s decision to rationalise and restructure the salaries of more than 23,000 SSA teachers, involving an annual financial commitment of nearly Rs 800 crore.

Later, Sangma inaugurated the newly constructed boarding building at Pine Mount School, fulfilling an assurance he had given to students during a visit to the institution in 2022, when they had highlighted leaking roofs, damaged floors and unsafe living conditions in the hostel.

“It gives me great satisfaction to be back at Pine Mount School today to

inaugurate this new boarding building. Sometimes, a simple interaction can lead to meaningful change,” he said. The chief minister also launched the “She Thrives” initiative, featuring sanitary pad vending machines to promote menstrual hygiene and dignity among girl students, saying the programme would be expanded to schools across the state. Addressing students, Sangma said the future of employment lay increasingly in entrepreneurship and private enterprise, noting that government jobs alone could not absorb the growing number of young job seekers. “Our focus is to create an ecosystem where young people can identify challenges, build solutions, and turn them into sustainable businesses,” he said.

Meghalaya govt moves granting bail to Sonam

SC against HC order

Shillong, July 03: The Meghalaya government has moved the Supreme Court against the bail granted to Sonam Raghuvanshi, who is accused of murdering her husband during their honeymoon in the northeastern state in 2025.

A bench of justices MM Sundresh and Sheel Nagu was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on Thursday that the high court has erred in granting bail to the prime accused in the case and sought urgent listing of the plea.

Mehta submitted that bail was granted as the grounds of arrest were not fully supplied to her at the time of arrest.

“The concerned non-supply of documents relates to a provision that was wrongly cited due to a typographical error,” he said, while emphasising that there was a chance of the accused absconding.

The bench agreed to list the matter for hearing on Friday.



Sonam, a resident of Indore in Madhya Pradesh, was arrested in June last year in connection with the murder of her businessman husband Raja Raghuvanshi.

The couple had gone missing while vacationing in Meghalaya’s Sohra area on May 23 last year. Subsequently, Raja’s body was found in a deep gorge on June 2 in 2025.

Police have alleged that Sonam conspired with hired assassins to kill her husband for financial gains. On June 29, the Megha-

laya High Court had upheld a trial court order granting bail to Sonam.

The high court had dismissed the criminal petition filed by the state government, seeking cancellation of the bail granted by the trial court on April 27.

It held that the manner in which the grounds of arrest were prepared reflected a “total non-application of judicious mind”.

“It is evident that such preparation was made without any application of mind... and nowhere is

found any specific allegation or information as to what are the actual charges against her,” the high court had observed.

“If this is the manner in which the intimation of the grounds of arrest is made, the same reflects a total non-application of judicious mind on the part of the arresting agency,” it had observed.

The high court had dismissed the state’s petition, holding that there were no grounds to exercise its inherent powers to cancel the bail.

Banned cough syrup worth Rs 2.5 crore seized over 39,000 bottles recovered

Shillong, July 03: In a major crackdown on drug trafficking, the Special Branch of Tripura Police, in coordination with the Government Railway Police (GRP), seized a massive consignment of suspected banned cough syrup worth over Rs 2.5 crore from the parcel van of the Deoghar Express at Agartala Railway Station late Thursday night, July 2. Acting on specific intelligence inputs, officials carried out a thorough search of the parcel van and recovered 39,345 bottles of suspected Eskuf and Fairdyl cough syrup. The consignment had been cleverly concealed inside 81 sealed metal drums, indicating a deliberate attempt to evade detection by law enforcement agencies. The operation was jointly conducted by the Government Railway Police (GRP), the Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF), and the Special



Branch of Tripura Police.

Speaking to reporters, Inspector General (Special Branch) Krishnendu Chakraverty said the seizure was part of the state’s sustained campaign against narcotics trafficking.

“Earlier, we had intercepted another consignment at Jirania Railway Station in West Tripura district. This is not a new phenomenon. Small consignments are also being smuggled through the railway network,

In a major crackdown on drug trafficking, the Special Branch of Tripura Police, in coordination with the Government Railway Police (GRP), seized a massive consignment of suspected banned cough syrup worth over Rs 2.5 crore from the parcel van of the Deoghar Express at Agartala Railway Station late Thursday night, July 2.

and we have detained people and seized such consignments. We remain committed to building a Nasha Mukti Tripura. Wherever we receive information, we act promptly and are leaving no stone unturned,” Chakraverty said. Police have initiated legal proceedings and launched an investigation to identify those involved in transporting and distributing the suspected contraband. Authorities are also probing the origin and intended destination of the seized consignment.

BJP trying to use SIR to remain in indefinitely

Shillong, July 03: Veteran CPI (M) leader and former Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar on Thursday alleged that the BJP was trying to prepare electoral rolls of its choice by using Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voters list to remain in power indefinitely.

Addressing a programme at Chailengta in Dhalai district, he alleged that the BJP’s prime target is to disenfranchise Muslims, labourers and poor by using SIR.

“This has been proven in Bihar, West Bengal and Assam too. They want to delete those valid voters whom they doubt will vote against the saffron party. Their prime target is to disenfranchise Muslim, labourers and poor by using SIR as a tool,” he said.

Claiming that the BJP wants to install fascist rule in the country, the former chief minister said they want to seize the voting rights of the people who are on their doubtful list. “In Tripura too, they are hatching a

conspiracy to disenfranchise valid electors who are on their doubtful list. If voting rights are seized, democracy will fall in the country, which is what the BJP is planning,” he said. Sarkar also claimed the BJP would have faced defeat in Tripura in the 2023 Assembly elections had the Tipra Motha Party (TMP) not secretly supported the saffron party. “The people, frustrated by the saffron party’s misrule, were determined to vote in the 2023 Assembly election, but it was not possible because of Tipra Motha’s clandestine understanding with the BJP,” he said.

The CPI(M) politburo member also lashed out at the RSS and VHP for trying to engineer division between Hindus and Muslims after the BJP came to power in the bordering state in 2018. Sarkar called upon the people to take the path of protest and agitation to resist the BJP from taking anti-people policies, as the state has been struggling on various fronts from job to law and order and corruption.

Hem Chandra Dev Goswami College commemorates its 61st founding anniversary



Demow, Jul 03: On Wednesday, Hem Chandra Dev Goswami (HCDG) College, Nitaipukhuri, commemorated its 61st anniversary of founding with a sense of unity, dignity, and

excitement. Dr. Gitamoni Handique Gogoi, the IQAC Coordinator, and Dr. Birinchi Kumar Borah, the college principal, planted two saplings on the campus to start the festivities.

Priyanka Dutta, a fifth-semester BA student, inaugurated an open session in the college auditorium with a Borgeet. Bipin Dutta, President of the Governing Body, presided over the meeting. Deka Satradhikar, Auniati Satra, and Debananda Deva Goswami were the session’s main guests, while Dr. Jyoti Prasad Saikia, vice-chancellor of Jagannath Borooah University in Jorhat, opened it.

In his inauguration address, Dr. Jyoti Prasad Saikia urged the students to embrace the concepts of “acceptability” and “adaptability” to their surroundings in order to live richer lives. Debananda Deva Goswami, the chief guest, shared his insightful thoughts on the significance of value education and the elements of the teaching-learning process. On the occasion, the college also launched a number of publications.

In the Kurung Kumey district, BRO completes a crucial Bailey bridge



Itanagar, Jul 03: In the Kurung Kumey district of Arunachal Pradesh, the Border Roads Organization (BRO) finished building a 180-foot Bailey bridge, which restored vital communication to advanced border communities. Despite intense monsoon rains, flash flood hazards, and challenging mountainous terrain, BRO employees working under Project Arunank built the bridge. Team 85 Road Construction Company and the 756 Task Force carried out the job. According to officials, the bridge will improve infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control, strengthen troop and equipment movement, and improve communication to outlying settlements. They stated that the project complements the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat mission by guaranteeing all-weather connectivity to India’s border regions.

India’s Dual Crisis of Catastrophic Rainfall and Monsoon Deficit

New Delhi, Jul 03: India is currently dealing with a severe meteorological paradox: localized cloudbursts that have caused catastrophic floods, along with a significant slowdown in the monsoon’s progress that has resulted in broad drought-like conditions. Although the nation’s total monsoon measures show a 38% deficit, many isolated areas have seen rainfall over average, severely straining life and infrastructure. Data obtained from June 1 to July 1, 2026, provides an ominous picture of agricultural and hydrological stress. A status of “Deficit” or “Large Deficit” has been reported over almost 79% of the nation’s geographical area, which includes 29 states. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reports that the country received



only 108.1 mm of rainfall overall, which is 37.5% less than the historical normal average of 172.9 mm for this particular month. A staggering 72% (535 districts) of the 741 districts under IMD supervision fall into the deficit or large deficit categories. On the other hand, just 201 districts (or 27%) were able to reach the normal or excess/large excess requirements.

Sonam Raghuvanshi’s Bail Relief Will Continue Following Supreme Court Confusion

New Delhi, Jul 03: Sonam Raghuvanshi, who is accused of killing her husband Raja Raghuvanshi during their honeymoon last year, was granted bail by the Meghalaya High Court. On Friday, the Supreme Court declined to stay this decision.

The state administration challenged the Shillong court’s April judgment giving Sonam bail after the high court affirmed it on June 29. The Supreme Court expressed reservations over the high court order but refused to suspend it, noting Sonam had already been released from jail. A bench of justices MM Sundresh and Sheel Nagu said it will first observe the progress of the trial. Sonam received a notice from it as well. During the court, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing for the

Meghalaya government, also highlighted the Pune fort murder case, where a man, Ketan Agarwal, was allegedly killed by his fiancée, Siya Goyal, and her lover, Chetan Chaudhary. According to him, Sonam cannot be freed on technical grounds because the accusations against her are grave. In June of last year, Sonam Raghuvanshi was taken into custody in relation to the murder of her businessman husband, Raja Raghuvanshi. Sonam and Raja, who are both from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, were married on May 11 of last year. On May 20, they took a honeymoon in Sohra, Meghalaya. Three days later, the couple vanished, and on June 2, the body of 29-year-old Raja was discovered. On June 9, Sonam, 25, was taken into custody



in Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh. Raj Singh Kushwaha, her lover, was subsequently taken into custody. On April 27, a trial judge granted her bail after she had been detained at Shillong District Jail for around ten months. The court noticed that the investigative agency failed to properly disclose the circumstances of her arrest. It noticed that

all arrest-related documents, including the arrest memo, justification checklist, inspection memo and case diary extract, wrongly stated Section 403(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita instead of Section 103(1), which deals with the charge of murder. Since none of the paperwork told her that she was being detained for murder, the court

determined that the recurring inaccuracy could not be dismissed as a simple clerical error. It further noted that she had not been informed of the precise details of the alleged offense at the time of her arrest. The Meghalaya government appealed a trial court’s order in high court, claiming a purely typographical error that did not prejudice the accused. The high court dismissed the appeal, noting the recurring error in multiple official documents and criticizing the arrest records for lacking detailed allegations against the accused. Justice W Diengdoh remarked on the failure of the arresting agency to apply judicial reasoning. The Meghalaya government subsequently escalated the matter to the Supreme Court, with hearings set to resume on July 9.

The PM will open the Pachpadra Refinery, which is expected to boost Rajasthan’s economy

New Delhi, Jul 03: The magnificent structure of pipes and some industrial equipment can be seen on the right side of the road as you travel from Jodhpur to Pachpadara, the nearby Sambhara village. On the opposite side of the road are a large school building, an under-construction hospital, hotels, restaurants, a gate welcoming you to Sambhara Village, and a board stating that the village’s road was built by the refinery. Soon after, as you begin to stroll along the village’s road, you come across another sign stating that the refinery is helping to build a school and a hospital. All of this illustrates the wealth this refinery has given to the area. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Pachpadra on July 4th to officially open the HRRL refinery. The region’s residents will benefit from new opportunities and a higher quality of life as a result of this important step towards India’s energy independence. The opening of the HPCL refinery in Pachpadra is scheduled. With an annual production capacity of 9 million metric tonnes, it is India’s first grassroots integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex. It will handle 7.5 million tonnes of imported oil and 1.5 million tonnes of crude oil from Rajasthan’s Mangala terminal. In addition this refinery can also produce other materials like Bitumen, Naphtha etc. This project will reduce India’s dependence on other countries and strengthen its capacity to export petroleum products. A 487-kilometer-long pipeline directly connects the refinery to Mundra Port, allowing crude oil from Russia and Gulf countries to be refined here efficiently. The refinery is expected to generate an annual revenue of around Rs 5,000 crore for the Rajasthan government, while also improving the lives of local residents. Preparations are underway for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit. The refinery is being projected as a key step towards making India self-reliant, while also reinforcing the political message of development.



The development is evident as one approaches the refinery. A hospital is being erected, schools have been constructed, and roads in neighboring communities have been upgraded. A township has been established for officials and engineers, and water pipelines have been installed. Balotra and Pachpadra are not the only places where this development is occurring. In quest of work prospects, people from neighboring areas are also coming here. The refinery has dramatically transformed the local community, providing stable employment and improved living conditions. Dharmendra, a security guard, appreciates the timely salary and better facilities. Rana, who now works in water supply, highlights his increased income of Rs 18,000 per month, a significant improvement from his previous job in salt mines. Access to clean drinking water and employment opportunities for women have also enhanced village life. Raveena and her sister, who moved for jobs after family loss, now enjoy financial independence. Overall, the refinery has created new job avenues and bolstered local businesses, addressing historical issues of low-paying employment and water scarcity in the region.

SC stops the Delhi power discoms’ CAG audit

New Delhi, Jul 03: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)-led audit of Delhi’s three private power distribution companies was halted on Friday by the Supreme Court, which also ordered the status quo to be maintained. The court noted that the legality of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission’s (DERC) decision to appoint the national auditor raises a debatable issue that needs to be investigated. The Rekha Gupta-led Delhi government, which had made the CAG audit a crucial component of its attempt to examine the capital’s private discoms’ finances before permitting the recovery of more than ₹38,500 crore in regulatory assets from customers, is disappointed by the stay ruling. The interim order was issued by a bench of justices KV Viswanathan and Shree Chandrashekhara during the hearing of DERC’s appeal against an April decision of the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL), which held that giving the audit to the CAG was against the law and instructed the regulator to designate an independent chartered accountant to conduct a rigorous audit. The bench noted, “The current civil appeal directly addresses the question of whether the DERC’s action in starting the distribution companies’ audit process by CAG is legally permissible.” Issuing notice on DERC’s appeal, the court delayed both the APTEL’s decision hiring a chartered accountant and the latest CAG audit ordered by the Delhi government earlier this month. “The APTEL directive on the appointment of any chartered accountant for audit would be suspended until further directives. The CAG shall also not proceed with audit in the meantime,” it directed. The same bench that delivered the August 6, 2025 ruling settling the framework for the phased liquidation of Delhi’s regulatory assets until 2031 and directing a “strict and intensive audit” into the circumstances leading to their accumulation was also ordered by the court to maintain the status quo until the matter is heard on July 15. The dispute involves regulatory assets of approximately ₹38,552 crore from Delhi’s distribution companies due to stagnant electricity tariffs amid rising costs. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing DERC, stated that audit approval from the Lieutenant Governor was crucial to prevent consumer burdens without understanding how these liabilities arose. The court challenged the relationship between liquidation of assets and the CAG’s auditor appointment legality. Senior advocates for the discoms asserted that audit and recovery issues were separate and referenced a Supreme Court judgment affirming a roadmap for asset liquidation until 2031. The bench mandated further hearings under the Chief Justice’s oversight, amid ongoing scrutiny of the asset recovery process after APTEL rejected DERC’s CAG appointment.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir issues a strict advisory as the Amarnath Yatra gets underway

New Delhi, Jul 03: The first group of pilgrims for the Amarnath Yatra 2026 departed at the same time from the base camps in Baltal and Nunwan, Jammu & Kashmir, for the sacred cave shrine on Friday. Deputy Commissioner Jatin Kishore flagged off the first group from the Baltal-Do-mail base camp in Ganderbal. DIG Maqsood-ul-Zaman, SSP Ganderbal Sudhanshu Dhama, and other senior civil, police, and security officers joined him. To ensure a safe and easy pilgrimage, officials said that all necessary preparations have been made along both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes, including security, medical assistance, RFID verification, and logistics. As they started their journey to the 3,880-meter-high subterranean temple, devotees showed excitement. Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir

released a new advisory at the beginning of the yatra, stating unequivocally that pilgrims should not enter the Union Territory without first registering. According to the advise, the daily cap on pilgrims permitted on the Yatra route has been set in compliance with Supreme Court directives. To guarantee pilgrims’ safety and the pilgrimage’s seamless operation, adherence to this daily restriction is essential. Authorities stated that advance registration facilities had been available well before the opening of the yatra through bank branches across the country and internet platforms, and that most pilgrims had already completed the process. As a result, slots for Tatkal (on-the-spot) registration are extremely limited. The administration said all pilgrims should travel to Jammu and Kashmir

only after completing advance registration. The advisory also pointed out that thousands of pilgrims continue to arrive without registration every day, making it impossible to accommodate such large numbers under the Tatkal facility. Unregistered pilgrims have been requested to wait for their turn and undertake the yatra only on the date allotted by the administration. Authorities further reported some registered pilgrims were coming ahead of their scheduled trip date. No pilgrim, the advise said, will be permitted to undertake the yatra before the day mentioned in their registration, and devotees have been asked to travel only on their designated date. Pilgrims who have already visited Jammu and Kashmir without registration have once again been advised to wait for their turn.

The administration, however, promised them that every pilgrim would receive an opportunity to perform the yatra in accordance with the prescribed protocol and available capacity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, meanwhile, wished pilgrims participating in the yearly Amarnath Yatra a safe and fortunate journey on Friday. The Prime Minister also released an open letter at the beginning of the trip, inviting followers to accept five resolutions centered on nation-building, cleanliness, safety, environmental protection, and support for local livelihoods. PM Modi called the Amarnath Yatra an enduring representation of India’s spiritual heritage and cultural cohesion in a post on X. The Amarnath Yatra, associated with Baba Barfani, is a significant part of spiritual tradition and cultural unity.

A toddler in Pune perishes after falling into a sewage pit filled with rainwater

New Delhi, Jul 03: According to authorities, a two-year-old boy died after falling into a sewage pit outside his Pune home that was filled with rainwater.

At approximately 10:30 on Thursday morning, the boy, Soham Lakhani Kasbe, was playing in front of his home when he fell into an unsecured hole. Four holes that were dug for rainwater and sewage drainage have allegedly been left uncovered without any safety precautions.

The Loni Kalbhori police in Pune have filed a complaint against an unnamed contractor.

The event occurred a few days after 11-year-

old Vihaan Srivastava was killed when a tree fell on his school bus in Chembur, Mumbai.

Four of the pupils who were rescued had minor injuries, while one boy had serious injuries. Residents’ complaints about the fragility of that particular tree were allegedly consistently ignored by local administrative agencies, according to Mayor Ritu Tawde.

The neighborhood’s dangerous, top-heavy trees have been the subject of several complaints to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), according to locals who have made grave accusations of civic incompetence.

Suspects connected to Pak handlers are detained by Rajasthan ATS, which also raids their homes

New Delhi, Jul 03: The Rajasthan Police Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) on Friday detained around 30 suspects for questioning as it conducted raids in Jaipur, Ajmer, Churu, Dungarpur, Barmer, and over a dozen other cities at the premises of those allegedly linked to Pakistani spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence handler Shahzad Bhatti via social media. The raids occurred the day after the Delhi Police claimed to have arrested Punjabi citizens Shubdeep Singh, 23, Gurjant Singh, 22, Sajan Singh, 28, and Gaganpreet, 24, as part of an alleged interstate terror and armament network operating at Bhatti’s request. One of the four allegedly carried out reconnaissance of police facilities and sites of worship in the city, according to the Delhi Police. They also stated that in order to avoid detection, the module was recruited to carry out a terror attack in Delhi and its surrounding areas and used international phone numbers to speak with their superiors. According to the Rajasthan ATS, Bhatti utilizes social media to entice youth with money, online games, and the glitz of terrorists and gangsters. Investigators assume he then expands his network and wants images and other material relating to critical places. Police superintendent (ATS) Manish Tripathi said the agency received intelligence about suspects in Rajasthan linked to Bhatti’s social media accounts. “After verifying the inputs, we started the operation on Thursday,” he said. Tripathi said the ATS prepared a list of those connected to Bhatti via social media before acting. He added that investigators are examining whether the suspects’ links were limited to social media or extended beyond online interactions. “If a person’s connection was found to be limited to social media, their electronic devices were returned after questioning.” According to Tripathi, several people’s roles have come under suspicion.

Their bank accounts, criminal histories, and backgrounds are being checked. If more questions are needed, they will be asked,” he stated. He stated that the operation is likely to end by Friday evening. As part of the inquiry, the ATS was looking at the suspects’ cell phones and social media profiles. According to the ATS, Babita alias Khadija, a suspected Jaish-e-Mohammed agent, was detained in Jaipur on June 22 in accordance with the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. She allegedly married a Jaish commander online and was preparing to escape to Pakistan, according to investigators.

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When Silence Is the Better Response

Modern communication encourages instant reactions. Whether responding to breaking news, workplace disagreements, or social media debates, people often feel compelled to reply immediately. Yet not every situation benefits from an instant response. Taking time to understand facts, reflect on different viewpoints,

or simply allow emotions to settle can prevent misunderstandings and poor decisions. Silence is sometimes mistaken for indifference, when it may actually represent patience and wisdom. In an age of constant commentary, knowing when not to speak has become an underrated skill.

Language, Identity, and the Assamese Question Today

The future of any language depends not only on how many people speak it, but on the pride, confidence, and practical value attached to it by the younger generation. In Assam, the Assamese language today stands at a critical cultural crossroads, where rapid social change, education choices, digital influence, and economic aspirations are reshaping how the youth engage with their mother tongue. While Assamese remains central to identity and heritage, its everyday usage is steadily declining in many urban and semi-urban spaces, raising concerns about its long-term vitality.

A key factor behind this shift is the growing preference for English-medium education, which many parents associate with better career prospects and social mobility. As a result, Assamese is often sidelined in homes and classrooms, even though research globally shows that early education in the mother tongue strengthens cognitive development and learning outcomes. This shift has unintentionally created a generation that is often neither fully fluent in Assamese nor entirely comfortable in English, weakening linguistic confidence on both fronts.

Economic realities further reinforce this trend. In a globalised job market dominated by English in corporate, technological, and professional sectors, many young people view Assamese as culturally important but professionally limited. This perception reduces the language to a symbolic identity marker rather than a functional tool of communication in modern industries. However, this outlook overlooks the possibility of integrating Assamese into administration, digital platforms, media, entrepreneurship, and education, where language can evolve alongside economic change.

The rise of digital technology has also significantly altered linguistic habits. Social media platforms and smartphones have encouraged the use of Roman script for Assamese, along with a growing mix of English and Hindi expressions in everyday communication. While technology itself is not harmful, its unregulated use has contributed to a weakening of script familiarity and

grammatical depth among younger speakers. At the same time, however, digital platforms also offer opportunities to revive Assamese through online education, content creation, apps, and artificial intelligence tools, provided they are used consciously.

Cultural exposure is another important dimension. Global entertainment and digital media have broadened horizons but have also reduced engagement with Assamese literature, history, and classical thinkers. Many young people encounter literary icons such as Lakshminath Bezbaroa or Jyotiprasad Agarwala only through academic syllabi, rather than through active reading or cultural participation. This weakening of literary connection directly impacts vocabulary, expression, and emotional depth in the language.

Ultimately, the survival and growth of Assamese depend on collective responsibility. Families, educators, policymakers, and content creators must work together to ensure that Assamese is not seen as a limitation but as a living, evolving language of knowledge and opportunity. The younger generation must be encouraged to use Assamese confidently in both traditional and modern domains, from classrooms and homes to digital platforms and professional spaces. If embraced with pride and adapted to contemporary realities, Assamese can continue to thrive as a language that carries both cultural memory and modern relevance into the future.

The role of public institutions and state policy becomes crucial in shaping linguistic outcomes. Language does not survive on sentiment alone; it requires institutional reinforcement through education systems, media representation, and administrative usage. If Assamese is to remain relevant, it must have a stronger presence in higher education, competitive examinations, scientific publications, and professional training materials. Without such institutional backing, the language risks being confined to informal communication and cultural expression, rather than functioning as a medium of intellectual and professional advancement.

Building a Circular Economy: Challenges in India’s Vehicle Recycling System

The push by Union Environment Minister Bhupinder Yadav to shift India’s mobility sector from a traditional “take-make-dispose” model towards a circular economy rooted in reuse, recycling and sustainable resource management represents a major policy transformation in the country’s environmental governance. The initiative aligns closely with India’s broader climate commitments and sustainability goals, particularly in the transport sector, where end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) are emerging as a significant environmental, regulatory and logistical challenge. However, while the policy vision is ambitious, its success will ultimately depend on whether India can build a transparent, scalable and economically viable formal recycling ecosystem capable of managing large-scale vehicle recovery.

At present, the formal infrastructure for vehicle scrapping in India remains limited and underdeveloped. The country currently has around 134 Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs), with a combined estimated annual capacity to dismantle and recycle between 10,000 and 15,000 end-of-life vehicles. In contrast, actual utilisation of these facilities remains far below potential, with fewer than 5 lakh vehicles having been scrapped through formal channels so far. This is occurring against the backdrop of projections suggesting that India could generate nearly 50 million

ELVs by 2030, revealing a widening gap between policy expectations and institutional readiness. The mismatch underscores a structural weakness in the current system, where infrastructure expansion has not kept pace with the scale of anticipated demand.

A key challenge behind the slow growth of the scrapping ecosystem lies in the lack of clarity over what constitutes an end-of-life vehicle and how scrapping decisions should be determined. The ongoing policy debate between age-based vehicle lifespan norms and fitness-based assessment frameworks continues to shape regulatory uncertainty. Many private and commercial vehicle owners argue that imposing an age-based scrapping requirement is unjustified if a vehicle remains roadworthy, meets safety standards, and complies with emission norms. This resistance has influenced both central and state-level policy discussions, contributing to hesitation among private investors who might otherwise consider entering the RVSF sector at scale.

In order to improve participation and make formal scrapping more attractive, policymakers have proposed a series of incentive-based measures. One of the key proposals involves linking enhanced motor vehicle tax concessions for new vehicle purchases to a Certificate of Deposit issued by RVSFs, which confirms the lawful scrapping of an old vehicle. Such a mechanism is intended to encourage vol-

untary scrapping behaviour among vehicle owners while simultaneously strengthening the formal recycling ecosystem. However, implementing such incentives would require extensive consultation with stakeholders, including vehicle owners, industry representatives and state governments, in order to develop a broadly accepted and operational definition of ELVs.

At the same time, concerns have been raised by state governments regarding the potential loss of revenue from motor vehicle taxes if scrap-page-linked concessions are expanded. Since motor vehicle taxation constitutes a significant source of state revenue, any reduction in collections could create fiscal pressure.

To address this, it has been suggested that the central government may need to share the financial burden or compensate states for revenue losses arising from scrap-page incentives. Without such fiscal coordination, implementation of a uniform national scrap-page framework could remain uneven, weakening its effectiveness across different states.

Another critical gap in the current system is the need for a robust and standardised vehicle fitness testing infrastructure. A transparent and scientifically reliable fitness assessment mechanism is essential to ensure that scrapping decisions are based on objective criteria rather than arbitrary enforcement or adminis-

trative discretion. Such a system would not only improve regulatory credibility but also help build trust among vehicle owners, who need assurance that decisions regarding scrapping are fair, consistent and technically justified.

The slow expansion of RVSFs has also contributed to unintended environmental consequences. In the absence of adequate formal facilities, a large proportion of end-of-life vehicles continue to be dismantled in informal scrapping units. These informal operations typically lack environmental safeguards and scientific processing methods, leading to the release of hazardous fluids, non-biodegradable petroleum compounds and other toxic substances. These pollutants can contaminate soil and groundwater, creating long-term ecological and public health risks. This undermines the very objective of the circular economy transition, which aims to reduce environmental harm through regulated recycling and resource recovery.

A recent report by NITI Aayog titled “Enhancing Circular Economy in End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs), Waste Tyres and E-waste and Lithium-ion Batteries in India” highlights that consumer decisions regarding scrapping are heavily influenced by financial considerations. Informal scrappers often offer higher immediate payments compared to formal RVSFs, making them more attractive in the short term. However, scrapping vehicles

through informal channels does not generate a Certificate of Deposit, which is required for deregistration on the VAHAN portal and for availing tax concessions on new vehicle purchases. This creates a structural disadvantage for informal scrapping despite its short-term financial appeal, while simultaneously limiting compliance with formal regulatory systems.

The report further identifies a critical structural weakness in the ecosystem: low utilisation rates of RVSFs. While the formal scrapping model is considered financially viable at full operational capacity, current utilisation levels are estimated to be below 20 percent. This underperformance significantly undermines the commercial viability of these facilities and discourages further private investment in the sector. As a result, the expansion of formal scrapping infrastructure remains slow, even as demand is expected to rise sharply in the coming years.

To address these challenges, NITI Aayog has recommended a set of targeted interventions. These include improved dissemination of information regarding scrap-page policies, clearer definition of institutional roles within the ELV ecosystem, and stronger integration between regulatory authorities and scrapping facilities. The report also suggests that state governments consider incentives to facilitate the transition of informal dismantling units into the formal sector. These may

include waiving past environmental penalties and establishing government-run or public sector scrapping facilities in regions where private investment is not commercially viable. Such measures could help bridge infrastructure gaps and improve geographic coverage of RVSFs.

If implemented effectively, these reforms could significantly expand India’s formal vehicle scrap-page capacity and improve compliance levels across the system. However, experts emphasise that regulatory reform alone will not be sufficient. Making the framework more vehicle-owner friendly is equally important to ensure long-term behavioural change.

Without simplified procedures, predictable incentives, transparent systems and adequate financial benefits, voluntary participation in formal scrap-page is likely to remain limited.

Ultimately, India’s transition towards a circular vehicle economy will require coordinated and sustained action across multiple levels of governance, including the central and state governments, regulatory bodies, industry stakeholders and consumers. While the policy direction is clearly aligned with sustainability objectives, the success of the framework will depend on addressing implementation bottlenecks, expanding infrastructure capacity, and ensuring that formal recycling systems are both accessible and economically viable at scale.

When Warning Signs Were Missed: The Southport Case and Britain’s Safeguarding Crisis

It is two years this month since Axel Rudakubana entered a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport and carried out a mass stabbing that killed three children—Alice da Silva Aguiar, Bebe King, and Elsie Dot Stancombe—and injured ten others. The attack has since become a defining moment in Britain’s ongoing debate over safeguarding failures, institutional coordination, and the limits of preventive policing. In response, the government has pledged to implement all 67 recommendations of the public inquiry into the incident, signalling an unusually strong commitment to systemic reform and accountability.

At the centre of the inquiry’s findings is a stark conclusion delivered by its chair, Sir Adrian Fulford: no single institution took ownership of the risk posed by Rudakubana. Despite multiple warning signs over time—including repeated expressions of interest in violence and an incident in which he was found carrying a knife on a bus in 2022—authorities failed to intervene decisively. Instead of arresting him or initiating coordinated safeguarding action, police at the time sent him home. For Sir Adrian, this moment encapsulated not a single lapse, but a broader systemic failure in which responsibility was diffused across institutions.

The inquiry highlights that Rudakubana’s trajectory was marked by repeated interactions with different parts of the public system—police, education authorities, and safeguarding services—yet none of these agencies were able to assemble a full picture of cumulative risk. Each institution held fragments of information, but there was no mechanism strong enough to combine them into a coherent threat assessment. This fragmentation allowed warning signs to remain isolated, preventing esca-

lation or meaningful intervention.

Sir Adrian and Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood have both emphasised that the objective of the reform agenda is to ensure that future cases involving similar behavioural patterns do not fall through institutional gaps. The emphasis is not simply on better policing, but on a redesigned system of information flow between agencies. The guiding principle of the reform is that risk must be collectively owned, rather than dispersed across disconnected institutions that assume others will act.

However, the inquiry makes clear that closing these gaps is far from straightforward. One of the most complex challenges lies in reforming information-sharing protocols between agencies, particularly when sensitive data such as health records or educational safeguarding concerns are involved.

Legal restrictions, ethical considerations, and privacy concerns create barriers that make seamless data integration difficult. Even where the willingness to share information exists, technical limitations—such as outdated IT systems—further hinder coordination.

The report also identifies structural weaknesses in how police forces and other agencies communicate across regions. Data does not flow smoothly even within the same sector, let alone between different public services. This lack of interoperability means that risk indicators can remain siloed within individual systems, never reaching the threshold where they can trigger coordinated action. In practice, this creates blind spots that can persist over long periods.

A further concern raised in the inquiry is the inconsistent way in which risk is escalated within schools and educational institutions. Rudakubana’s previous re-

errals to the Prevent programme were not effectively shared with other agencies, meaning that later concerns could not be assessed in the context of his full behavioural history. This failure to assess “cumulative risk” is identified as one of the most significant systemic weaknesses in the case, as it prevented authorities from recognising a pattern of escalating concern.

The government has already begun responding to some of these findings through a series of policy changes. These include tighter scrutiny over the sale of knives and other weapons, as well as new restrictions on social media companies to prevent underage access to harmful content. In addition, the Department for Education is reviewing safeguarding protocols in out-of-school settings such as leisure centres, while also reassessing how schools monitor and filter students’ online activity.

Another dimension of reform under consideration is the extension of reporting responsibilities beyond traditional public institutions. The Law Commission is examining whether individuals such as parents or taxi drivers should have clearer legal obligations to report concerning behaviour. The inquiry notes that Rudakubana’s family did not alert authorities to his behaviour, a factor that has raised difficult questions about familial responsibility and early intervention thresholds.

While these changes represent significant policy movement, officials acknowledge that such granular reforms will take time to implement. Adjustments to legal frameworks, administrative systems, and inter-agency protocols cannot be achieved overnight. However, ministers argue that incremental reform is essential if the system is to become more responsive to early warning signs in future cases.

One of the most consequential

developments emerging from the inquiry is the shift in how preventive policing frameworks are understood. Previously, referral mechanisms such as Prevent were largely focused on ideologically motivated extremism. However, a separate review by David Anderson, now endorsed by the government, has broadened this scope. It clarifies that individuals do not need to be driven by a fixed ideological belief to be referred; those fixated on violence itself may also pose a comparable risk.

This shift reflects a growing recognition within the Home Office that contemporary threats are more complex than traditional categories of extremism allow. Individuals who are not ideologically motivated but demonstrate persistent violent fixation can still present serious dangers. As a result, the Prevent programme is being recalibrated to account for behavioural risk patterns rather than ideological classification alone.

The second phase of the Southport inquiry is expected to focus further on this category of individuals, particularly young men whose violent tendencies may not be linked to organised extremist ideology but are nonetheless deeply concerning. This phase will run alongside the work of a newly established government taskforce designed to translate inquiry findings into operational reforms across policing, education, and safeguarding systems.

Despite the scale of reform being proposed, the inquiry itself acknowledges that no system can fully eliminate the risk of similar tragedies occurring in the future. What it can do, however, is reduce the likelihood that warning signs will go unrecognised or unaddressed. The emphasis is therefore not on achieving perfect prevention, but on improving institutional responsiveness and

coordination.

Sir Adrian Fulford’s central warning is that past inquiries have too often resulted in reports that remain unimplemented, weakening public confidence in the state’s ability to learn from tragedy. The government’s commitment to fully adopting the 67 recommendations is therefore seen not only as a policy decision, but as a test of democratic credibility and institutional accountability.

Ultimately, the Southport case raises difficult questions about how modern states manage fragmented information in complex social systems. The challenge is not simply identifying risk, but ensuring that risk is understood in its full context across multiple agencies. Without such integration, warning signs may remain visible but unconnected, allowing danger to persist unnoticed.

As Britain moves forward with its reform agenda, the central question remains whether institutions can overcome long-standing structural fragmentation and develop a genuinely coordinated approach to safeguarding. The Southport inquiry suggests that the answer will depend less on individual competence and more on systemic design. Whether those lessons translate into lasting change will determine not only how the state responds to future threats, but also how it restores public trust in its capacity to protect its citizens.

As reforms begin to take shape, attention is also turning to how frontline workers will be trained to interpret and escalate risk signals more consistently across agencies. Officials argue that cultural change within institutions will be as important as technological upgrades, ensuring that early warning signs are acted upon decisively rather than being normalised or overlooked within fragmented systems.

Slide 8% in two days: What’s weighing on the stock Bank of Baroda shares

Mumbai: Shares of Bank of Baroda (BoB) continued to fall sharply on Friday, sliding 3.83 per cent to touch a low of Rs 250.20 in early trade. At this level, the stock has slumped 7.85 per cent in two trading days.

The decline came after the state-run lender informed stock exchanges that it had entered into an out-of-court settlement with the joint administrators of NMC Health PLC, NMC Healthcare Ltd and NMC Holding Ltd, with the payment being settled by its Abu Dhabi Branch. BoB noted that the case involved proceedings under ADGM and UK insolvency law, and UAE civil law in relation to NMC Health, NMC Holding and NMC Healthcare. The trial in the ADGM proceedings commenced on March 23, 2026. The English proceedings were stayed pending the outcome of the ADGM proceedings, it added.

Sharing settlement details, the lender said, “NMC Health, NMC Healthcare, NMC Holding, and their respective Joint Administrators have resolved the claims between them and the Bank of Baroda in consideration for, inter alia, payment by Bank of Baroda of \$600 million (around Rs 5,700 crore), pursuant to a settlement agreement. All claims, causes of action, etc. between them have been resolved without admission of liability or wrongdoing. The settlement agreement and its terms otherwise remain confidential. The liability of the bank in these proceedings is limited to this sum.” It also said, “Pursuant to the settlement agreement, the ADGM have been discontinued. The English Proceedings are in the process of being discontinued.”

In a separate development, BoB said its global business rose 15.46 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to Rs 30.51 lakh



crore as of June 30, 2026.

The lender’s global advances increased 17.42 per cent YoY to Rs 14.17 lakh crore, while global deposits grew 13.81 per cent YoY to Rs 16.34 lakh crore during the same period.

From a technical standpoint, the stock was trading below its 5-day, 10-day, 20-day, 30-day, 50-day, 100-day, 150-day and 200-day simple moving averages (SMAs). Its 14-day relative strength index (RSI) stood at 34.64. An RSI below 30 is considered oversold, while a reading above 70 is viewed as overbought. According to Trendlyne data, BoB has a standalone/consolidated price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio of 6.58/6.76 and a price-to-book (P/B) value of 1.04. Earnings per share (EPS) stood at 38.72/37.66, while return on equity (RoE) was 15.82. The stock’s one-year beta was 1.35, indicating relatively high volatility.

PB Fintech shares fall 7% Amid high turnover; Macritchie likely seller in block deal



New Delhi: Shares of PB Fintech Ltd tanked 7 per cent in Friday’s trade amid block deals. A total of Rs 1,978.78 crore worth shares changed hands on the counter as trading kicked off. Macritchie Investments Pte Ltd, a public shareholder under the foreign direct investment category, was looking to sell up to 1.19 crore PB Fintech shares, representing 2.6 per cent of the company’s outstanding equity. The floor price was set at Rs 1,604 apiece, a 4.6 per cent discount to Thursday’s NSE closing price of Rs 1,682.10 apiece and the deal size was said to be Rs 1,908.80 crore. On Friday, the scrip fell 7 per cent to hit a low of Rs 1,564.10 apiece. PB Fintech’s insurance premium growth is expected to remain healthy in the June quarter, with health insurance seen growing substantially, supporting strong momentum in the core online business. As per MOFSL, its profitability is expected to improve further, supported by operating leverage and scale benefits. The growth trajectory of new business initiatives is likely to remain subdued due to slower execution in the UAE business, the brokerage said which believes a possible changes in commission structure will be key monitorable when the company announces its Q1 results.

Data available with BSE suggests Macritchie Investments Pte Ltd held 2.99,41,996 shares or 6.47 per cent stake in the parent of online insurance aggregator Policybazaar and digital consumer credit marketplace Paisabazaar. The seller will be subject to a 60-day lock-up period on its residual stake. PB Fintech has seen several block deals in the past one year, including by co-founders Yashish Dahiya and Alok Bansal. Tencent Cloud Europe BV was also involved in May 8 and March 6 block deals this year.

In the fourth quarter of FY26, PB Fintech reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 261 crore, marking a 54 per cent growth compared with Rs 170 crore in the corresponding period last year led by the strong performance of new health and life insurance policies. Consolidated revenue in Q4 climbed 36.7 per cent year-on-year to Rs 2,061 crore, backed by healthy demand across insurance products and sustained growth in financial services offerings.

Bharti Airtel, DMart, Eternal among Axis Securities’ 15% to 43% upside potential

Mumbai: Indian equities have recovered from the volatility seen earlier this year, but the road ahead is unlikely to be driven by broad market rallies alone. According to the brokerage report by Axis Securities, the focus is now shifting towards companies that can deliver steady earnings, protect margins and offer better growth visibility.

Axis Securities’ top 15 picks with up to 43% upside potential span sectors ranging from financial services and telecom to consumer, healthcare and materials. Let’s take a look at the stock the brokerage house is bullish on – Axis Securities in its report noted that the easing geopolitical tension and the correction in crude oil prices have improved investor sentiment after a volatile phase.

The report noted that “the easing of geopolitical tension, declining crude oil prices, resilient domestic macroeconomic conditions, improving rural outlook and supportive policy measures from the Reserve Bank of India provide a favourable backdrop for equities.” Even so, Axis Securities believes investors should not expect

every stock to benefit equally. Instead, company-specific performance is likely to play a much bigger role over the coming months. With the first quarter earnings season for FY27 getting underway, Axis Securities expects management commentary to become more important than headline numbers. According to the report, “management commentary regarding future demand conditions will be equally, if not more, important than reported financial performance.” Investors are expected to closely track demand trends, pricing power, raw material costs, margins, capital expenditure, export demand and order inflows before taking fresh investment calls. Axis Securities added, “companies capable of delivering positive earnings surprises along with confident management commentary are expected to outperform.” Axis Securities believes the recent correction has made valuations relatively more comfortable, but future returns will largely depend on earnings delivery rather than market-wide expansion. The report noted, “the market is increasingly transitioning into an environment where earnings quality, val-

uation discipline and stock selection will determine investment success, rather than broad-based market expansion.” The brokerage continues to prefer sectors such as banking and financial services, telecom, capital goods, healthcare, power and energy, while maintaining a positive outlook on select consumption-related businesses and capital expenditure-linked companies. It, however, remains cautious on the Information Technology sector in the medium term due to concerns around artificial intelligence-led disruption. Axis Securities has maintained its December 2026 Nifty target at 27,220, while advising investors to stay prepared for intermittent volatility. The report recommends that “investors maintain good liquidity (10-15%) to use any dips in a phased manner and build a position in high-quality companies...with an investment horizon of 12-18 months.” Axis Securities noted, “quality and growth-oriented companies with sustainable business models, pricing power, and earnings visibility will remain key outperformers through FY27.”

Cigarette volumes seen falling by high single-digits hold or sell

Mumbai: Emkay Global on Friday said the cigarette business of ITC Ltd remained in flux following a sharp tax hike and anticipated turbulent times ahead for the segment. The domestic brokerage said the FMCG-Others business remained on a healthy growth trajectory, with improving margins. It also noted that the balance sheet for ITC remained healthy, supported by strong cash generation of over Rs 15,000 crore in FY26. For now, Emkay Global maintained its ‘Add’ rating with a target price of Rs 310 apiece. Emkay said the return profile for ITC has consistently improved in the past few years, led by higher profitability and also partly due to the demerger of the hotels business. It said the ITC stock currently trades at 18 times estimated forward one-year earnings per share, which is at one standard deviation below its past five-year average. In the case of Paperboard business, t navigated early margin pressure from cheap imports and soaring wood costs, recovering in H2FY26 via cooling raw material prices and import protections (MIP).

Emkay said FY26 started well for ITC with resilient volume growth and continued focus on strengthening its product portfolio. ITC, it said, launched 15 new cigarette products, including Classic Clove, American



Club Super Slims and Gold Flake Kings Longs.

That said, the unprecedented tax hike in February 2026 disrupted the industry, leading to sharp price increases and mix change, which impacted volumes. British American Tobacco (BAT) held 22.91 per cent stake in ITC through Tobacco Manufacturers India (17.79 per cent), Myddleton Investment Company Ltd (3.88 per cent) and Rothman International Enterprises (1.24 per cent). “We expect the industry to remain in flux over the coming quarters, and expect cigarette volumes to decline by high single-digits. As price increases have largely been lower than the tax hike,

we expect EBIT margin to remain under pressure as well,” Emkay said.

The broking firm said ITC’s FMCG-Others segment revenue grew 10 per cent YoY, with EBITDA margin expanding 20 basis points YoY to 10 per cent. “Branded Packaged Foods (84 per cent of sales) drove overall growth, led by market extensions in Aashirvaad, Sunfeast, and Bingo!, alongside macro tailwinds and premiumization. The management fortified its future pipeline by launching 100 new products, scaling digital acquisitions (Rs13.5bn revenue run rate), and expanding a fresh food cloud-kitchen network,” Emkay said.

Should you put Experts say don’t decide before checking these 5 things Only ₹1,800 into EPF

New Delhi: The Employees’ Provident Funds (EPF) Scheme, 2026, has clarified that the mandatory employee contribution remains ₹1,800 a month, or 12% of the statutory wage ceiling of ₹15,000. While contributions above this amount can continue, they are now explicitly treated as voluntary. For employees currently contributing EPF on their full basic salary, the clarification opens up a choice: reduce contributions and increase monthly take-home pay, or continue saving more for retirement. Financial experts say the answer depends on your personal circumstances rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Your age is one of the biggest factors. Employees in their 20s and 30s generally have decades before retirement, allowing higher EPF contributions to benefit from long-term compounding. Continuing contributions on a higher salary could help build a significantly larger retirement corpus.

On the other hand, someone nearing retirement may prefer greater liquidity if their retirement savings are already adequate and immediate financial needs take priority. “If you are asking whether somebody should put more money into EPF, that depends entirely on the individual,” said Germaine Pereira, Partner at Solomon & Co. She believes investors should avoid concentrating

all their retirement savings in one instrument.

“Parking all your money in EPF doesn’t make sense. People should also consider mutual funds or other investment vehicles rather than putting everything into one scheme,” Pereira said

The right choice depends on how much retirement wealth you have already accumulated and your long-term financial objectives. 3. Your need for higher monthly cash flow—Some employees may benefit more from higher take-home pay today. If you are repaying a home loan, funding children’s education or meeting other major financial commitments, reducing your EPF contribution to the mandatory amount could improve monthly cash flow. Under the EPF Scheme, 2026, employees whose employers currently deduct PF on their actual basic salary may choose to contribute only the statutory ₹1,800, subject to employer policy, thereby increasing their in-hand salary. MUST READ: EPF Scheme 2026: Can ₹1,800 a month create a ₹19 lakh retirement fund

4. Understand the tax implications While EPF continues to enjoy tax advantages, employees should not ignore the applicable tax provisions before increasing voluntary contributions. Pereira noted that voluntary contributions are permitted, but tax



implications under the Income-tax Act must also be considered. Employees planning to contribute significantly beyond the mandatory amount should therefore evaluate the tax treatment alongside the expected retirement benefits

5. Don’t forget diversification The new rules also preserve the Voluntary Provident Fund (VPF), allowing employees to contribute well beyond the statutory limit. According to Siddharth Maurya, Founder and Managing Director of Vibhavanag Anukulakara Pvt. Ltd., employees now have greater flexibility to redesign their salary and savings strategy. “You can continue with full VPF contribution from your end, or have a higher take-home by contributing only what is statutory,” he said. However, experts caution against putting an entire retirement

portfolio into EPF. A balanced allocation across EPF, mutual funds, National Pension System (NPS), fixed-income instruments and other investments may offer better diversification while addressing both long-term growth and liquidity needs. The EPF Scheme, 2026, has not reduced the contribution rate of 12% or changed core retirement benefits. Instead, it gives employees greater flexibility in deciding how much to contribute beyond the statutory minimum.

Before opting for a lower PF deduction simply to boost take-home pay, employees should assess their age, retirement goals, liquidity requirements, tax position and overall investment portfolio. The right decision is ultimately a financial planning choice rather than just a payroll calculation.

Kusumgar IPO opens Check price band, issue size, key dates, GMP

Mumbai: Mumbai-based engineered fabrics maker Kusumgar on Friday fixed the price band for its Rs 650-crore initial public offering at Rs 398-419 per share. The public issue will open on July 8 and close on July 10. At the upper end of the price band, the company is valued at Rs 4,399.1 crore. The IPO is entirely an offer-for-sale by promoters, with the entire net proceeds going to the selling shareholders — Siddharth Yogesh Kusumgar, Sapna Siddharth Kusumgar and Siddharth Yogesh Kusumgar HUF. The company has also reserved shares worth Rs 3.5 crore for employees, who will get them at a discount of Rs 39 per share to the final issue price.

Investors can bid for a minimum of 35 equity

shares and in multiples of 35 thereafter. At the upper price band, the minimum investment for retail investors is Rs 14,665, while the maximum investment under the retail category is Rs 1,90,645. Of the total issue, 50 per cent has been allocated to qualified institutional buyers, 15 per cent to non-institutional investors and 35 per cent to retail investors. Kusumgar manufactures woven, coated and laminated synthetic fabrics, and offers more than 1,000 fabric configurations for the aerospace and defence, industrial and automotive, and outdoor and lifestyle segments. It also makes engineered fabrics and solutions based on polyamides, polyester filaments and polyurethane chemistry. The company competes with listed peers



including Garware Technical Fibres, Arvind and SRF. For the financial year ended March 2026, Kusumgar reported a 12.3 per cent decline in net profit to Rs 98.2 crore from Rs 112 crore a year earlier. Revenue fell 11.2 per cent to Rs 692

crore from Rs 779 crore. In FY25, however, profit had risen 32.7 per cent to Rs 112 crore, while revenue grew 66.5 per cent to Rs 779 crore over FY24. Axis Capital, the company was commanding a grey market premium of Rs 135 apiece.

Outrage over ‘cruel’ Florida move to ban undocumented students from college

UK: Immigration advocates in Florida have decried a “cruel and harmful” new rule by education officials aligned with hard-right Republican governor Ron DeSantis to ban undocumented students from state colleges and universities.

The Florida board of education voted on Tuesday to bar access to its 28 state-funded institutions to anybody not a US citizen or “lawfully present” in the country. It follows Florida’s move last year to strip discounted in-state tuition rates for certain immigrant students.

Opponents on Wednesday assailed the new directive, which some analysts estimate could cost Florida up to \$15m annually in lost tuition and other fees. They also questioned if it was legal, given that it was approved by DeSantis’s hand-picked board of seven, instead of the elected state legislature.

“The rule-making process is supposed to implement existing legislation and laws that were passed, not create its own, and not create its own policies, which is exactly what the department

is trying to do,” said Alexis Tsoukalas, senior analyst of the Florida Policy Institute, at a press conference hosted by the Florida Immigrant Coalition.

She said the action ran contrary to DeSantis’s own “Sail to 60” goal, a 2019 policy that sought to lift the number of Florida residents with “high-value” post-secondary education from below 50% to at least 60%.

“The Florida college system is already struggling with declining enrollment; this has been the case for the past several years, and it’s only gotten worse,” she said.

“It’s not like there are students waiting in the wings to enroll when others are denied admission. Florida cannot reach its attainment goal if a shrinking share are enrolling, so it is very much a concern for the state.”

Alexander Vallejos, a so-called Dreamer and computer science student at the University of Central Florida, who came with his family from South America in 2001 as a one-year-old, said it was cruel to dash the hopes of immigrant children who



worked through the school system to graduate high school, only to find their pathway to higher education blocked.“This ruling sends a painful message to young people who have done everything right,” he said. “It tells them that their hard work isn’t enough, and that their dreams are less because of something they have no

control over.

“Behind every policy is a real person, a student’s story, where they’re staying up late to study, a young person working two jobs just to pay for college, a future engineer, teacher, nurse, entrepreneur. They just want the chance to succeed.”

Luisa Santos, an elected member of the Miami-Dade school, who was brought to the US by her family from Colombia as an eight-year-old, said the state faced “serious consequences” for moving ahead with the ban.

“[It’s] everything from the \$15m in lost tuition and fees estimated as a result of this, and even our governor getting in his own way of stated goals like Sail to 60, which so many school districts around Florida have worked so hard to try to accomplish,” she said.

“What I really want to focus on is how cruel, harmful, and just unnecessary this rule is right now. These rule changes took me back to the darkest days of high school, where, like Alexander, I felt the world caving in on me.

Republican state senator Don Gaetz told the Florida Phoenix that only citizens and documented immigrants should be allowed to attend the state’s colleges and universities.

“The policy issue is: should illegal aliens receive taxpayer-funded higher education in Florida? And in my view, the answer to that question should be no,” he said.

“And if necessary, I will file legislation to ensure that the decision of the state board is enshrined in statute.”But Anna Eskamani, a Democratic state representative running to become Orlando mayor, spoke by telephone during the public comment section of Tuesday’s board of education meeting to denounce the policy, according to the outlet.

“The attempt to restrict a child’s access to higher education based on the documentation status that is no fault of their own is un-American, it’s unfaithful, and it’s absolutely also constitutionally concerning because, obviously, we did not pass legislation on this matter,” she said.

Police uncover international networks of men using online chat groups to drug and rape women



UK: An international police operation spanning seven countries has uncovered highly organized networks of offenders who drug and rape their partners and use online chat groups to aid and encourage their “horri-fying” assaults, authorities said on Thursday.

In most cases, the victims are women who are sedated before being raped and sexually assaulted, Europol and Britain’s National Crime Agency (NCA) said. The online groups provide a haven for predominantly male perpetrators to coordinate assaults, share information as well as post videos and photos of the abuse, they said.

German and British crime agencies, with the help of law enforcement from the United States, Brazil, Canada, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Spain, have launched a joint operation to tackle the “evolving threat,” Britian’s NCA said in a statement Thursday.

Often, the victims have no idea they have been sexually assaulted until they are contacted by police, and the abuse is committed by “someone they know and trust, and in some cases by multiple connected offenders,” the agency said.

The investigations come after the high-profile case of Gisele Pelicot in France, whose husband solicited dozens of strangers to rape her while she was un-

conscious, in a case that shocked the world and sparked a cultural reckoning on gender-based violence and misogyny in the country.Since launching the cross-border police collaboration, dubbed Project Medusa, in April, European investigators say they have identified more than 150 offenders and victims, and opened more than 270 new leads.But the true scale of these crimes and number of victims is unknown and “almost certainly underreported,” according to Britain’s NCA.

“Drug-facilitated sexual assault is no longer isolated behaviour, but increasingly organized, conducted via coordinated networks and enabled by digital platforms, requiring a more sophisticated operational response,” said Nigel Leary, deputy director at the NCA. Perpetrators seek to “objectify and dehumanise” their victims and in some cases the abuse takes place over decades, said Europol, which is coordinating the operation.“They use encrypted messaging services, forums, and closed chat groups to exchange experiences, normalize abusive behaviour, facilitate the illegal trade in prescription medications and narcotics, and coordinate criminal acts,” it added.

In these online groups, offenders share information about which drugs to use, how to administer them, how to avoid detection, and request and share videos and photos of the abuse.

Siobhan Blake, the rape and serious sexual offences lead for the UK’s Crown Prosecution Service, said the abuse “is some of the most horrifying I have seen in my career.”

“Victims are being subject to horrendous sexual offending in their own homes in an ultimate breach of trust,” she said.Police warn that victims can be any age, social background or ability, and have encouraged anyone who suspects they have been a victim of drug-facilitated sexual assault to come forward.Across Europe there have been several arrests and convictions in recent years of men who have been accused or found guilty of drugging and raping their unconscious partners.

Dominique Pelicot was handed a 20-year prison sentence in 2024 for organizing the drugging and rape of his then-wife Gisele. Fifty others were also convicted.Last year, German national Fernando P. was found guilty of drugging and raping his unconscious wife for years and sharing video of his crimes online, and sentenced to 8 years and 6 months in prison.

Also in 2025, Zhenhao Zou was convicted of raping 10 women in the UK and China and jailed for life

New Orleans residents on warning to abandon sinking city: ‘Nobody wants to leave home’

America: When a study in May concluded that New Orleans had hit a “point of no return” due to the climate crisis that would require people to eventually retreat from their storied yet ultimately doomed city, the local reaction was swift and fiery.

The onward march of rising seas around a sinking city was unsettling, but the study was “more focused on generating publicity and clickbait headlines” than coming up with solutions, said Helena Moreno, New Orleans’s mayor. There was flooding in Miami, and wildfires and earthquakes near San Francisco, Moreno pointed out, “yet no serious movement exists to declare those cities lost causes”.

Others were less diplomatic. “It’s really the most ridiculous study I have ever seen,” said Gordon Dove, the head of Louisiana’s coastal restoration agency, who took aim at Torbjörn Törnqvist, the lead researcher. “I don’t think he knows what he’s talking about,” Dove fumed.

But of the torrent of New Orleansians who got in touch with Törnqvist about the study, typically after reading about it in the Guardian, most had grasped the precarity of the city’s future, according to the Tulane University academic, who is a leading expert on the fraying marshlands of the Mississippi Delta.

“I’ve found it encouraging – we’ve had more constructive reactions than negative ones,” Törnqvist said. “Of course it’s upsetting to hear this, but cities like New Orleans have an expiration date. We’ve already crossed a tipping point of survivability for our coastal wetlands. The rate of sea level rise is way too high.

“We will be surrounded by open water and New Orleans will be like a fortress in the Gulf of Mexico. It will be like Venice, a few islands in a lagoon.” A decision by Jeff Landry, Louisiana’s Republican governor, to cancel a \$3bn project to naturally revive the vanishing coastline with sediment carried by the Mississippi is a fur-



ther “death penalty” for New Orleans, Törnqvist argues. The process of encirclement, Törnqvist and his fellow researchers stress, will still be a gradual one taking several generations. Protected for now by billions of dollars’ worth of levees, pumps and flood gates, New Orleans doesn’t face the immediate pressure of evacuation.

But galloping sea level rise beside low-lying land that is rapidly eroding as well as subsidizing will only end one way, the study warns: the Louisiana coastline moving as much as 62 miles (100km) inland, swallowing the New Orleans region in the coming century or so.

“The general sentiment is that we are here, and we want to stay,” Törnqvist said. “I get that – I live here and I’m not planning on leaving. But we need to think differently about the city and relocation. It will be an incremental process that involves a lot of steps. We might not know how to do it but we will have to figure this out. Let’s try to embrace it rather than deny it.”

Relocating a city of the size of New Orleans is unheard of in the US, which has no national strategy for the growing number of people displaced by crumbling coastlines and extreme weather. Even much smaller resettlements of vulnerable towns in thawing Alaska have been plagued by prob-

lems, with Donald Trump’s administration slashing programs that help communities escape the fallout of an overheating planet.But for some in New Orleans, the relocation question can no longer wait.

The city is already losing people – shrinking in four of the five last years, now at just more than 360,000 people – for a host of reasons. That includes some of the highest rates of home insurance in the country due to the risks of living on a bowl-shaped spit of marshland below sea level, surrounded by water in a hurricane zone.

“We are an indicator species – soon, other people are going to have stranded real estate assets and nowhere to turn,” said Steve Picou, a musician and environmental planner who with his wife, Grasshopper, moved from their longtime New Orleans house three years ago after their annual home insurance rates jumped from \$900 to about \$9,000 over the past two decades.“The whole concept of relocation is overwhelming for people. They don’t like to think about it,” said Picou, who moved to Opelousas, which sits 130 miles north-west of New Orleans at a more comfortable 66ft (20 meters) above sea level. “But there’s no escaping this climate. Towns are going to have the opportunity to be receiver communities and they need

to start thinking about that now.”

In a striking new response to this prospect, a loose coalition of New Orleans community groups have in recent weeks traveled to assess two cities that could provide potential escape routes – Vicksburg and Natchez, both situated roughly three hours away by car in neighboring Mississippi.

Debra Campbell, the chair of the main non-profit – A Community Voice, which has about 9,000 members in New Orleans – said there’s nascent interest in acquiring or building properties for New Orleansians to flee to should they be displaced by a storm similar to the devastating Hurricane Katrina, which hit the city in 2005. We’re only going to leave if we’re forced to leave due to hurricanes, flooding and the heavy industrialization of our neighborhoods,” Campbell said. In arranged meetings, residents and officials in Vicksburg and Natchez welcomed the idea of an influx from New Orleans and discussed the renovation of empty homes and use of public facilities as temporary shelters, she added.

“I told them: ‘We’re coming. We’re coming in an exodus,’” Campbell said. “‘We’re not coming to lay on your leg – we’re looking for employment. We want our kids in school. Once we’re pushed out of here, we have to have somewhere to go.’”

Enhance your handbag collection by adding both fashionable and functional options



During sale season, one category that subtly drains bank accounts is handbags. There is always space for an additional tote, another office bag, or yet another travel companion that vows to finally bring order to your life. With the Amazon Prime Day Sale commencing on July 4, this is the ideal moment to enhance your handbag collection before the most significant discounts vanish. Whether you need a roomy office tote, a stylish everyday carryall, or a practical travel bag, these handbags strike the right balance between fashion

and function. Better yet, many of them are already seeing price drops ahead of Prime Day, making this the ideal time to add them to your wishlist. Bags to add to cart during Prime Day Sale: 1. Miraggio Denice Large Tote Bag: The Miraggio Denice is the kind of tote that works as hard as you do. Designed with professionals in mind, it comfortably fits laptops up to 14 inches while still leaving enough room for chargers, notebooks, makeup pouches, water bottles, and everyday essentials. The structured silhouette gives

it a premium, polished appearance that easily transitions from office meetings to after-work plans. One of its biggest strengths is versatility. Carry it by the elegant top handles for a formal look, or attach the adjustable sling strap for hands-free convenience during commutes and travel. Style it with: Tailored trousers, oversized shirts, blazers, and loafers. 2. VAYA Zaelia Office Tote Bag: If organisation is your love language, the VAYA Zaelia tote deserves your attention. Unlike regular office bags, this one

comes with dedicated insulated lunch storage, allowing you to carry your meals separately without sacrificing laptop space. The structured design looks professional enough for boardrooms while the removable shoulder strap offers flexibility throughout busy workdays. It is an excellent investment for professionals who carry multiple essentials every single day. Style it with: Co-ord sets, midi dresses, structured kurtas, and block heels. 3. Puffy Shoulder Tote Bag: Puffy bags continue to dominate fashion trends, and this tote is proof that comfort can also be stylish. The soft, quilted design gives it a relaxed aesthetic while multiple compartments ensure your belongings stay organised. Its lightweight construction makes it particularly useful for travel, airport looks, shopping days, gym sessions, and casual weekends when you don't want a heavy structured handbag weighing you down. Style it with: Oversized T-shirts, joggers, sneakers, and casual co-ords. 4. Lavie Mono Freya Monogram Tote Bag: Few handbag styles feel as timeless as a monogram tote. The Lavie Freya combines a sophisticated printed ex-

terior with a spacious interior, making it equally suitable for office use and casual outings. The structured silhouette instantly elevates even the simplest outfit while offering enough room for daily essentials. It is ideal for women who want one handbag that can seamlessly transition between work, brunch, shopping, and travel. Style it with: Denim, shirt dresses, tailored separates, and minimal jewellery. 5. Carrylux Soft PU Tote Bag: Simple, functional, and versatile, the Carrylux Soft PU Tote is designed for women who like fuss-free handbags. The roomy compartment easily fits everyday essentials, while the soft PU construction makes the bag comfortable to carry throughout the day. Its adjustable strap allows multiple carrying styles, making it equally useful for college, office, shopping trips, or weekend outings. Style it with: Straight-fit jeans, oversized shirts, casual dresses, and ballet flats. 6. ZOUK Office Essential Jute Tote Bag: For those looking to make more conscious fashion choices, the ZOUK Office Essential Tote offers sustainability without compromising

style. Crafted using jute with vegan leather accents, it has a handcrafted appeal that stands out from conventional office bags. The spacious interior comfortably accommodates work essentials while the earthy aesthetic pairs beautifully with Indian and contemporary wardrobes alike. Style it with: Linen co-ords, cotton sarees, chikan-kari kurtas, and handcrafted jewellery. 7. Recycled Non-Woven Felt Tote Bag: Minimalist and practical, this recycled felt tote proves sustainable

bags can be stylish too. The lightweight yet durable construction makes it suitable for carrying heavier items including laptops, books, groceries, and travel essentials. Its understated design also makes it an excellent secondary work bag or everyday carryall for those who appreciate functional accessories. Style it with: Neutral wardrobes, monochrome outfits, linen separates, and sneakers. 8. Waterproof Heavy Duty Tote Bag: If versatility had a handbag, this

would be it. Designed with waterproof material, reinforced handles, multiple compartments, side pockets, and even a trolley sleeve, this tote is built for people constantly on the move. Whether you're traveling, heading to work, carrying gym gear, or packing for an overnight stay, this bag handles it all with ease. Its practical design makes it one of the most functional options on this list. Style it with: Airport co-ords, cargo pants, oversized hoodies, and comfortable trainers.



Kurta sets that I would genuinely wear on a weekly basis



Let us be truthful. Many of us possess an excessive number of kurtas yet still find ourselves standing in front of the wardrobe each morning contemplating, "I have nothing suitable to wear." The issue does not stem from a deficiency of clothing. Rather, it lies in the reality that only a select few outfits meet all the necessary criteria. They must be comfortable enough for an entire day, stylish enough to garner compliments, breathable enough to suit the Indian climate, and versatile enough to be appropriate for various occasions, ranging from office meetings and coffee dates to grocery shopping and family lunches. The best kurta sets are the ones you instinctively reach for without overthinking. They're easy to style, photograph beautifully, don't require elaborate accessorising, and make you look effortlessly put together. These are exactly those kinds of outfits. 10 kurta sets I'd wear on repeat

every week 1. Klosia Pure Cotton Sleeveless Kurta Palazzo Set: Summer dressing becomes infinitely easier when sleeveless kurtas enter the picture. This Klosia set is crafted from breathable pure cotton and paired with matching palazzo pants that give the outfit a relaxed yet polished finish. The sleeveless silhouette keeps you cool during humid days while still looking refined enough for work or casual outings. The beauty of this set lies in its simplicity. It doesn't try too hard, which makes it incredibly versatile. Dress it up with statement earrings or keep it minimal for everyday wear. Style it with: Oversized sunglasses, tan sandals, and a structured tote. 2. Kaari Women's Salwar Suit: Kaari has built a reputation for creating elegant ethnic wear that feels premium without becoming overly festive, and this kurta set continues that tradition beautifully.

The silhouette is timeless, making it suitable for women of every age while offering enough detailing to keep the outfit visually interesting. This is one of those dependable outfits you'll happily wear to office meetings, festive lunches, or family gatherings without feeling either overdressed or underdressed. Style it with: Pearl studs, block heels, and a sleek wristwatch. 3. Kaari Women's Chikankari Kurta Set with Dupatta: Chikankari never goes out of style, and this Kaari set proves exactly why. The straight-fit kurta is elevated through elegant embroidery while the lightweight chiffon dupatta adds movement without feeling bulky. The straight pants with side pockets are a thoughtful addition because practical ethnic wear always deserves extra points. Style it with: Silver jhumkas, embroidered juttis, and soft curls. 4. Women's Linen-Cotton Kur-

ta & Dupatta Set: Linen-cotton blends have quietly become one of the smartest fabrics for summer dressing. This beige kurta set, finished with delicate multi-colour floral prints, feels fresh, understated, and incredibly elegant. The breathable fabric makes it comfortable enough for long days, while the subtle floral detailing ensures it never feels plain. It's the sort of outfit that looks expensive without trying too hard. Style it with: Kolhapuris, oxidised jewellery, and a woven tote bag. 5. Arayna Cotton Printed Kurta Set with Pants & Dupatta: Soft floral prints always find their way back into summer wardrobes, and this Arayna set gets the balance just right. Crafted in breathable cotton, it combines comfort with delicate prints that feel feminine without becoming overwhelming. The coordinated pants and dupatta make getting dressed incredibly easy; perfect for mornings when you're running late but still want to look polished. Style it with: Nude flats, delicate jewellery, and a sleek low bun. 6. EthnicJunction Linen Floral Kurta with Farshi Salwar Set: Farshi salwars are having a major fashion moment right now, and it's easy to understand why. Their dramatic volume feels elegant, comfortable, and refreshingly different from conventional straight pants. Paired with a breathable linen floral kurta, this outfit manages to look contemporary while staying rooted in classic Indian silhouettes. It's fashion-forward without becoming intimidating. Style it with: Statement earrings, strappy sandals, and a soft dewy makeup look. 7. Klosia Pure Cotton Sleeveless Kurta Palazzo Set: If your wardrobe revolves around breathable basics, this sleeveless cotton set deserves a place in it. The relaxed silhouette makes it ideal for hot weather while the matching palazzo pants create an effortless-

ly coordinated appearance. Minimal doesn't have to mean boring, and this set proves exactly that. Style it with: Sliders, oversized sunglasses, and a crossbody bag. 8. Nermosa Cotton Block Printed Kurta Pant with Dupatta: Block prints continue to dominate ethnic fashion because they effortlessly blend heritage craftsmanship with contemporary styling. This Nermosa kurta set embraces that aesthetic beautifully through classic motifs and lightweight cotton construction. The coordinated dupatta completes the outfit without making it feel overly festive, making it perfect for everyday elegance. Style it with: Oxidised silver jewellery and handcrafted flats. 9. ANNI Designer Printed Kurta Pant Dupatta Set: Some outfits work harder than others, and this ANNI set easily falls into that category. The straight silhouette flatters most body types, while the V-neckline adds structure and elegance. The subtle prints ensure it transitions effortlessly between office hours, brunch plans, and evening errands. It's the definition of practical style done right. Style it with: Block heels, a structured office tote, and delicate studs. 10. GoSriKi Embroidered Viscose Kurta Set: Viscose fabrics naturally drape beautifully, instantly making outfits look more fluid and elegant. This embroidered GoSriKi kurta set strikes the perfect balance between everyday comfort and festive sophistication. The embroidery adds richness without overwhelming the outfit, making it suitable for celebrations, office festivities, or intimate family gatherings. It's one of those versatile investments you'll continue reaching for long after the trend cycle moves on. Style it with: Metallic heels, chandelier earrings, and a sleek clutch.

Office Chair vs. Gaming Chair

Selecting the appropriate chair for your home setup ultimately hinges on a single question: Which one should you purchase? Initially, gaming chairs may appear to be enhanced office chairs, featuring larger frames, more vibrant colors, and additional cushioning. However, upon examining the price tags, you may observe that numerous office chairs are priced lower, leading to the impression that they represent a more economical choice. It is tempting to conclude that the less expensive option is the better one. That is where things get interesting. Office chairs and gaming chairs are built with completely different goals in mind. From the materials used to the way they support your body and even their price points, every detail has a reason behind it. So, if you are planning to shop during the Amazon Prime Day Sale 2026, here is a simple breakdown, along with a few of my favourite picks, to help you spend your money wisely. What is an office chair?Office chairs are built with one thing in mind. Keeping you comfortable through long hours at your desk. If your day is filled with meetings, emails and spreadsheets, this is the category made for you. Most office chairs keep the design simple. You will usually find mesh backs, fabric seats and neutral colours that fit neatly into almost any room. They do not scream for attention, and that is exactly the point. The real value comes from ergonomics. A good office chair supports your lower back, keeps your posture in check and lets you adjust everything from the armrests to the seat height and, on better models, even the seat depth. Small adjustments can make a huge difference after spending several hours in front of a screen. Another big advantage is

breathability. Mesh-backed chairs are a blessing during Indian summers, especially if your workspace does not stay cool throughout the day. The only downside is that some people find office chairs a little plain. Premium ergonomic models can also cost a small fortune, making them less attractive if you are shopping on a budget. What is a gaming chair?Gaming chairs are impossible to miss. Inspired by racing car seats, they usually come with bold colours, high backs and plenty of cushioning.Unlike office chairs that focus on subtle looks, gaming chairs are made to be part of your setup. If your desk has RGB lighting, multiple monitors and gaming accessories, one of these fits right in.Their biggest selling point is full back support. Most models include a tall backrest, a head pillow and a separate lumbar cushion. They also recline much further than office chairs, making them great for relaxing between gaming sessions or watching a film after work.That said, gaming chairs are not perfect. Many affordable options use PU leather, which can feel warm after sitting for long periods. Some racing-style seats also have raised side bolsters that can feel restrictive, especially for people who prefer more room to move around. What should you look for before buying? Ergonomics comes first This is the one area you should never compromise on. If you spend eight or more hours working at your desk, proper lumbar support and adjustable armrests matter far more than flashy looks. Your back will thank you months later.Gaming chairs offer excellent upper back and neck support, but not every model provides the same level of lower back support as a good ergonomic office chair.

ENTERTAINMENT

Amitabh Bachchan explains fear behind juggling 10–15 films together

Mumbai : Imagine shooting for one film in the morning, rushing to another set by afternoon, and wrapping up the day as a completely different character by night. Sounds exhausting, right? But for many stars of Hindi cinema’s golden era, that was just another day at work.

One of them was Amitabh Bachchan. In his latest blog, the veteran actor looked back at how different filmmaking was when he started his career. While actors today spend weeks or even months preparing for a role, Big B said that wasn’t something his generation had the luxury of doing. Sharing a series of photos on Thursday night, Amitabh reflected on how the idea of “prep” has become an important part of filmmaking today. He wrote, “the prep was word or an explanation unknown to my generation and beyond .now ‘its’ a common vocabulary, where one prepares for the work to be undertaken. For me, it was an unknown entity. I see now the amount of labour and pain, creative artists put



into getting into the character, in looks and style and comprehensive character analysis.” He went on to praise today’s actors for the effort they put into understanding their roles before facing the camera. Calling it an important part of the creative process, he added, “a most valid and thoughtful act, and my admiration to those who can give this aspect the more than required serious consideration and be prepared for the work undertaken. Good and impressive. But in the good old days when we all worked on 10 to 15 films at the same time – many two or three the same day, it would have

been impossible to prep for one and not prep for the other ..on the same day!!!” Back then, things worked very differently. Instead of extensive workshops or rehearsals, actors would often understand a scene only after reaching the set. According to Amitabh, the director or assistant director would explain the sequence before filming began. He also shared why actors of his generation took on so many projects at once. Recalling those days, Big B wrote, “Many ask how you slip from one role to another in the course of a day for different films. Bhai saheb, na kare-

in to yeh dar rehta tha ki aage kaam milega ki nahin, to jo kaha jaata tha use niyमित roop mein dhaal dene ka prayatn kiya jaata tha, aur intezaar rehta tha, mahinon baad jab film release hoti thi, ki humne usmein kya aur kaise kiya!!! (Brother, if we didn’t do it, there was always the fear of whether we’d get work in the future. So whatever we were told, we tried our best to adapt to it sincerely. Then we would wait for months until the film was finally released, eager to see what we had done and how it had turned out).”

On the work front, Amitabh Bachchan will next be seen in the sequel to Kalki 2898 AD. Directed by Nag Ashwin, the film also stars Prabhas and Kamal Haasan. The first instalment, released in 2024, turned out to be a blockbuster, earning over ₹1,000 crore worldwide. Amitabh’s performance as Ashwatthama received widespread praise, and he will reprise the role in the sequel. The makers are yet to announce the film’s release date.

Rajinikanth vs Chiranjeevi: Dussehra showdown looms

Hyderabad : The Telugu distribution market could be headed for one of its biggest battles in recent years if Superstar Rajinikanth’s Jailer 2 and Megastar Chiranjeevi’s Vishwambhara arrive during the same Dussehra window.

According to leading distributors, the two big-ticket entertainers are currently eyeing release dates just a day apart, with Jailer 2 targeting October 15 and Vishwambhara expected to hit theatres on October 16. “If both films stick to these dates, it will be a clash of titans in the Telugu states. Nearly Rs 300 crore worth of theatrical business is riding on these two films together, making it one of the biggest distribution battles in recent times,” says a leading distributor. For distributors and exhibitors, the clash is far more significant than just fan rivalry. Both films are expected to demand a massive number of premium screens, making theatre allocation,



show timings and revenue sharing a major challenge across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The proposed clash also revives memories of 2023 when Chiranjeevi’s Bhola Shankar released alongside Rajinikanth’s Jailer. While Jailer went on to become a blockbuster and dominated the box office, Bhola Shankar failed to sustain its run. This time, however, the trade believes the contest could be much closer. Vishwambhara is being mounted

as a high-budget fantasy adventure aimed at family audiences, while Jailer 2 enjoys the advantage of a hugely successful franchise and the goodwill created by Nelson Dilipkumar’s blockbuster first installment. Trade circles point out that both films have the potential for massive openings on their own. However, a head-on collision could divide audiences, reduce repeat footfalls and limit the long theatrical run that each film would otherwise enjoy.

Trivikram Srinivas eyes major milestone beyond family dramas

Hyderabad : Director Trivikram Srinivas has carved a niche for himself as one of Telugu cinema’s finest storytellers, winning audiences with memorable family entertainers such as Athadu, Jalsa, Attarintiki Daredi and Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo. Renowned for his thought-provoking dialogues and effortless comic timing, Trivikram has consistently blended emotion, humour and commercial appeal.

“Trivikram is a master of dialogues and light-hearted entertainers. His writing reflects a deep understanding of relationships and life, while his comic punchlines have become his trademark,” says a producer. Over the years, Trivikram has delivered major successes with stars like Pawan Kalyan, Mahesh Babu and Allu Arjun. However, not every collaboration has struck gold. “His film Jai Chiranjeeva with Chiranjeevi couldn’t recreate the magic because the narrative felt contrived. Similarly, Agnyaathavaasi with Pawan Kalyan and Guntur Kaaram with Mahesh Babu did not

meet the huge expectations surrounding them. Every successful director goes through such phases,” the producer adds. Among his most appreciated works is Aa, where he proved that a simple family drama, backed by engaging entertainment and strong emotions, could become a blockbuster. The chemistry between Nithiin and Samantha, coupled with Trivikram’s trademark humour, continues to make the film a favourite among family audiences. After a brief gap, Trivikram is re-



turning to his comfort zone with Adarsha Kutumbam, a family entertainer starring Venkatesh. Trade circles believe the film could mark

War, starring Jr NTR. The film marks Trivikram’s first attempt at an epic action drama with mythological undertones, a genre vastly different from the family entertainers that established his reputation. “It is the biggest challenge of his career. He has reportedly begun extensive pre-production to perfect the visual design while simultaneously refining the script. Mounting a star-driven epic with large-scale action, war sequences and a mythological backdrop requires an entirely different skill set,” says the

producer. Industry insiders believe God of War could redefine Trivikram’s career if it succeeds. Having mastered family dramas over the years, the filmmaker now appears determined to prove that he can also deliver a grand cinematic spectacle on the scale of the biggest Indian epics. Many even see it as his attempt to enter the league of filmmakers capable of mounting visually rich magnum opuses, a space currently dominated by directors like S.S. Rajamouli.

Hollywood producer Moritz Borman passes away at 71

Agency : Some filmmakers stay behind the camera but leave a lasting mark on cinema. Through the stories they help bring to life, their work continues to influence audiences long after the credits roll. One such name was Moritz Borman, the veteran German producer whose career spanned political dramas, literary adaptations and Hollywood blockbusters. Borman died of natural causes in Munich on Wednesday. He was 71.



The news of his death was confirmed by his longtime producing partners, Eric Kopeloff and Philip Schulz-Deyle. Over the course of his career, Borman produced more than 25 feature films, building a body of work that ranged from critically acclaimed dramas to big-budget action franchises. He first gained recognition with director John Huston’s 1984 film Under the Volcano, adapted from Malcolm Lowry’s celebrated novel. The film received widespread acclaim and earned Academy Award nominations for Albert Finney’s lead performance and its

musical score. He later produced The Quiet American, the 2002 adaptation of Graham Greene’s novel about a British journalist, an American spy and a young Vietnamese woman during the final days of the First Indochina War. The film earned Michael Caine an Oscar nomination for Best Actor and also starred Brendan Fraser. Borman shared a long creative partnership with director Oliver Stone, producing several of his films, including Alexander, World Trade Center, W., Savages and Snowden, the biographical drama based on CIA whistleblower Edward Snowden.

Saurav Das criticizes Diljit Dosanjh, urges youth encouragement

Mumbai : A day after Diljit Dosanjh distanced himself from the Cockroach Janta Party’s protests, the latter’s spokesperson Saurav Das has now expressed disappointment. Das was recently asked about the Punjabi singer-actor’s comments when he admitted that he is “upset” with it. He also requested Dosanjh to come forward and talk about the issues of youth in India. “That is very sad. I think he should comment something. He must encourage youth. He does it with his music, can do the same with his words about this movement or by talking about youth’s problems. He should say



something,” Das said. Watch the video here. During a recent Instagram live session, Diljit Dosanjh was asked about the ongoing protest at Jantar Mantar led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). Diljit made it clear that he prefers not to comment on it. He said that he was un-

aware of the situation due to his busy Aura Tour schedule. He also urged people to keep him out of protests, stating that he is not a politician and would rather remain focused on his work as an entertainer. “Bro, keep me away from protests and such things. I am an artist. I am not a politician,” he said. The globally popular singer further added that it is impossible for everything in the world to be perfect or entirely right. “Everything can never be right. Everything in this world can never be right,” he said. Diljit Dosanjh was recently seen in the Intiaz Ali directorial Main Vaapas Aaunga, a period drama set against the backdrop of the India-Pakistan Partition. The film, which also stars Naseeruddin Shah, Sharvari and Vedang Raina, has emerged as one of the notable successes of 2026, earning strong audience appreciation and steady box office growth on the back of positive word of mouth.

Bharti-Haarsh celebrate Kaju’s annaprashan

Mumbai : Star comedian and television host Bharti Singh gave fans a glimpse of her younger son Yashveer Limbachiyaa, fondly called Kaju, as they celebrated his ‘Annaprashan’ ceremony.

The second time mommy shared the entire celebration in her latest vlog on her YouTube channel. Bharti and her husband, writer-producer Haarsh Limbachiyaa, were seen having organised a small puja at their house, where the venue was beautifully decorated with flowers.

Family members and friends of the couple gathered for the occasion, with some relatives travelling all the way from Amritsar to be a part of the celebration, as mentioned by Bharti. Amid the holy Vedic chants and prayers, the couple performed the ‘Annaprashan’ ritual before feeding seven-month-old Kaju his first taste of kheer. Bharti was seen expressing gratitude to Lord Ganesha by chanting, “Ganpati Bappa Morya,” and said that their little one could now start enjoying regular food.

The vlog also showed family members lovingly feeding the little one kheer and also showered him with gifts. Bharti and Haarsh looked overjoyed and joked that both of them were willing to accept gifts on behalf of Kaju. The little one appeared cheerful throughout the ceremony as he sat in his mother’s lap. Bharti and Haarsh’s elder son Laksh Limbachiyaa, popularly known as Gola, was also seen enjoying the occasion. Following the rituals, the family came together for a festive meal and spent time playing games and celebrating the occasion.

Bharti and Haarsh welcomed their second bundle of joy in December last year. Talking about the couple, they are considered among television’s most popular celebrity couples and have collaborated on many comedy and reality shows over the years. Bharti who is touted to be one of India’s most loved comedians, has entertained audiences through shows such as ‘The Great Indian Laughter Challenge’, ‘Comedy Circus’, ‘The Kapil Sharma Show’, ‘India’s Got Talent’ and numerous hosting assignments.



Amitabh Bachchan reveals why he juggled 15 films at once



Mumbai : Imagine shooting for one film in the morning, rushing to another set by afternoon, and wrapping up the day as a completely different character by night. Sounds exhausting, right? But for many stars of Hindi cinema’s golden era, that was just another day at work. One of them was Amitabh Bachchan. In his latest blog, the veteran actor looked back at how different filmmaking was when he started his career. While actors today spend weeks or even months preparing for a role, Big B said that wasn’t something his generation had the luxury of doing. Sharing a series of photos on Thursday night,

Amitabh reflected on how the idea of “prep” has become an important part of filmmaking today. He wrote, “the prep was word or an explanation unknown to my generation and beyond .now ‘its’ a common vocabulary, where one prepares for the work to be undertaken. For me, it was an unknown entity. I see now the amount of labour and pain, creative artists put into getting into the character, in looks and style and comprehensive character analysis.”

He went on to praise today’s actors for the effort they put into understanding their roles before facing the camera. Calling it an important part of the creative process, he added, “a most valid and thoughtful act, and my admiration to those who can give this aspect the more than required serious consideration and be prepared for the work undertaken. Good and impressive. But in the good old days when we all worked on 10 to 15 films at the same time – many two or three the same day, it would have been impossible to prep for one and not prep for the other ..on the same day!!!”

Back then, things worked very differently. Instead of extensive workshops or rehearsals, actors would often understand a scene only after reaching the set. According to Amitabh, the director or assistant director would explain the sequence before filming began. He also shared why actors of his generation took on so many projects at once.

Recalling those days, Big B wrote, “Many ask how you slip from one role to another in the course of a day for different films. Bhai saheb, na karein to yeh dar rehta tha ki aage kaam milega ki nahin, to jo kaha jaata tha use niyमित roop mein dhaal dene ka prayatn kiya jaata tha, aur intezaar rehta tha, mahinon baad jab film release hoti thi, ki humne usmein kya aur kaise kiya!!! (Brother, if we didn’t do it, there was always the fear of whether we’d get work in the future. So whatever we were told, we tried our best to adapt to it sincerely. Then we would wait for months until the film was finally released, eager to see what we had done and how it had turned out).”

Sunny Deol’s batwara 1947 teaser gets brother Bobby’s sweetest praise

Mumbai : Sunny Deol’s upcoming film Batwara 1947 has already got fans talking after its teaser dropped. But one reaction stood out from the rest. Bobby Deol was quick to shower love on his elder brother, sharing an adorable message that fans of the Deol family are sure to love.

Bobby took to Instagram soon after the teaser was released and couldn’t stop praising Sunny and the film. Sharing the teaser, he wrote, “You’re the best, Bhaiya! So excited and looking forward to this film. Wishing you and the entire team all the very best. The teaser looks amazing, this movie is definitely going to be awesome!” Batwara 1947 reunites Sunny Deol with director Rajkumar Santoshi after iconic films like Ghayal, Damini and Ghatak. The movie is also



special because it marks Sunny’s first collaboration with Aamir Khan Productions.

The film is based on Asghar Wajahat’s famous play Jis Lahore Nai Vekhya, O Jamiya E Nai. Set during the 1947 Partition, it tells a story of humanity, hope and sacrifice in the middle of one of India’s most difficult periods. Sunny will be seen playing Sikander Mirza, while Preity

Zinta returns to the big screen with the film. The cast also includes Shabana Azmi, Ali Fazal, Abhimanyu Singh and Karan Deol in key roles. The project was first announced as Lahore 1947 before being renamed Batwara 1947. Behind the scenes, Santosh Sivan has handled the cinematography, A.R. Rahman has composed the music and Javed Akhtar has written the

lyrics. The film is all set to release in theatres on August 14, 2026, just ahead of the Independence Day holiday. Meanwhile, Bobby has a busy lineup of his own. After Bandar, which released in June 2026, he will next be seen in YRF Spy Universe’s Alpha. Directed by Shiv Rawail, the action thriller stars Alia Bhatt and Sharvari in the lead. Anil Kapoor plays an important role, while Hrithik Roshan will make a special cameo. The film releases on July 3, 2026. Bobby will also play the main villain in Vijay’s Jana Nayagan, directed by H. Vinoth. The film is currently awaiting its theatrical release after footage from the movie leaked online a few months ago. Apart from his films, Bobby is all set to return as the much-loved Baba Nirala in Ek Badnaam... Aashram Season 4.

“Nation First, Keep Yatra Clean” PM Modi’s Letter To Amarnath Pilgrims

New Delhi, July 03: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written a special letter to devotees ahead of this year’s Amarnath Yatra, describing the annual pilgrimage as “a great blessing” and encouraging them to turn their spiritual journey into a collective commitment to cleanliness, safety, local livelihoods, environmental conservation, and nation-building. In the two-page message titled “A Letter from the Hon’ble Prime Minister to the Pilgrims,” PM Modi greeted devotees with “Har Har Mahadev” and “Jai Baba Barfani,” claiming that the sacred pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine in Jammu and Kashmir represents India’s enduring spiritual and cultural traditions. “Participating in the sacred Amarnath Yatra in Jammu & Kashmir is, in itself, a great blessing,” the Prime Minister wrote, adding that every year devotees from across the country eagerly await the opportunity to undertake the pilgrimage. Calling the Yatra an “enduring chapter in India’s spiritual tradition,” PM Modi said it reflects the country’s unity in diversity as devotees from different regions, languages, and traditions come together with a shared devotion to Lord Shiva. “People from different states, speaking different languages and following diverse traditions, complete this journey united by their devotion to Mahadev,” he wrote. The Prime Minister also acknowledged the role played by the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, the Jammu and Kashmir administration and security agencies in ensuring the smooth conduct of the pilgrimage. “For several decades, the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board and the Jammu & Kashmir administration have managed this pilgrimage with great efficiency and dedication,” PM Modi said. He further praised the Indian Army,



CRPF, Jammu and Kashmir Police, ITBP, BSF, NDRF, healthcare workers, doctors, sanitation workers, administrative officials, and volunteers for their service to pilgrims. “This year as well, thousands of personnel are discharging this responsibility with commitment,” he noted. Highlighting the role of local communities, PM Modi said the pilgrimage also showcases the hospitality of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He particularly mentioned pony operators, porters, and palanquin bearers who assist devotees on the challenging mountain route, describing their contribution as an expression of India’s age-old tradition of selfless service. The centrepiece of the Prime Minister’s message is an appeal to devotees to adopt five pledges during the pilgrimage. The first pledge focuses on cleanliness, urging pilgrims to maintain hygiene and help keep the entire Yatra route clean. The second asks devotees to strictly follow all administrative instructions,

traffic regulations, and safety advisories, while exercising extra caution due to rain, slippery terrain, and cold weather. In the third pledge, PM Modi linked the pilgrimage with the government’s ‘Vocal for Local’ campaign, encouraging pilgrims to spend at least 10 per cent of their travel expenditure on purchasing locally made products to support the livelihoods of families and young people in Jammu and Kashmir. “Inspired by the spirit of ‘Vocal for Local,’ we will spend at least 10 per cent of our travel expenses on purchasing local products. This will strengthen the livelihoods of families and youth in Jammu & Kashmir,” the letter stated.

The fourth pledge encourages pilgrims to participate in the ‘Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam’ campaign by gifting a sapling to a sibling on Raksha Bandhan, which coincides with the conclusion of this year’s Yatra. The fifth and final pledge broadens the message beyond the pilgrimage itself.

Breel Embolo and Dan Ndoye score as Switzerland beat Algeria to reach the FIFA World Cup 2026 last 16



Vancouver: Switzerland defeated Algeria 2-0, with goals from Breel Embolo and Dan Ndoye, to progress to the round of 16 at the World Cup. Switzerland will face the winner of the Friday encounter between Colombia and Ghana in Kansas City, Missouri. The round of 16 game is scheduled for next Tuesday in Vancouver. Switzerland has not won a knockout round match in France since 1938, although in 1954, the team advanced to the quarterfinals after winning a playoff game. Although the Swiss had

reached the round of 16 in the previous three World Cups, each tournament had a smaller field of 32 teams, and they were unable to advance. Algeria was eliminated after returning to the World Cup for the first time since 2014, when it progressed to the knockout phase before losing to eventual winner Germany. Algeria dominated the opening ten minutes until Johan Manzambi sprinted down the right side and crossed to Embolo for the tap-in. Embolo marked his 26th international goal with a knee slide. Ndoye

scored less than a minute into the second half with a powerful shot from the top of the box that diving Algeria goalkeeper Luca Zidane could not stop. Fabian Rieder nearly got a third goal for Switzerland in the 81st minute but missed on the tap-in as the ball skirted across the face of Algeria’s goal. FIFA President Gianni Infantino was at the game, his second of the day. Earlier he attended the match between Spain and Austria in Inglewood, California. Algeria advanced as a third-place finisher after a 3-3 draw against Austria

last Saturday in Kansas City. The result sent both teams through to the knockout round but eliminated Iran. Algeria captain Riyad Mahrez, 35, scored a pair of goals. The Swiss got goals from Rubén Vargas and Manzambi to beat Canada 2-1 on Wednesday — spoiling Canada’s hopes of playing their first-ever knockout-round game on home soil. Instead, Switzerland got the return trip to Vancouver. The Swiss also got a week off, during which time they returned to their training base in San Diego. Manzambi, 20, has become the breakout star for Switzerland in the tournament, with a pair of goals and two assists. He played off the bench to start the World Cup, but earned a starting role in the team’s last two games. Algeria head coach Vladimir Petkovic coached Switzerland from 2014-21 and led the team to the out of the group stage in the 2018 World Cup. He also was at the helm when the Swiss went to the quarterfinals of the European Championships in 2020.

In a divided cricket world, AB De Villiers speaks out against Team India’s thinking on Vaibhav Sooryavanshi

New Delhi: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has literally split the cricket world on whether the Indian squad is holding back the adolescent. The fact that Sanju Samson has failed to score in three consecutive matches has aided Sooryavanshi’s cause. Ravi Shastri, Michael Vaughan, and Alastair Cook have all stated that Sooryavanshi should have made his T20I debut in the two-match series against Ireland. Then there’s the party of Cheteshwar Pujara and Saba Karim, who believe Sooryavanshi’s participation should not come at the price of an experienced player. The Indian team management is similarly of the belief that Sooryavanshi would have to put in the work. “He (Sooryavanshi) is unequivocally ready to play international cricket. India assistant coach Ryan Ten Doeschate praised Sanju Samson for his contribution to the team’s World Cup victory three months prior. He had a strong IPL season, and it is critical to instill confidence in players and send a message that we want to give them a lengthy run in the squad. We’re all delighted to watch Vaibhav



play, but he has to go through the same procedures. There is no doubt about his abilities.” AB de Villiers varies from Ryan ten Doeschate. “When will he be unleashed?” I believed the Ireland series would be an excellent opportunity for him to get experience in international cricket. It was terrible that he never had the opportunity. I disagree with Ryan ten Doeschate’s claim that Sooryavanshi must go through the same process as any other participant. After his IPL performance, it was time to throw him into the deep end, especially against a lower-ranked side like Ireland, to acquire some experience,” AB de Villiers remarked on his YouTube channel.

Irfan Pathan cites under-fire Sanju Samson’s technical flaw as Vaibhav Sooryavanshi’s popularity grows

Durham: Sanju Samson is under pressure. While this may not be the case with the Indian team management, outside voices are becoming increasingly louder. Samson’s previous three innings have produced scores of 5, 0, and 1 (two against Ireland and one against England), making his case more tough, especially with Vaibhav Sooryavanshi waiting in the wings. Former India cricketer Irfan Pathan has now identified a mechanical fault in Samson’s batting that renders him susceptible. “You want to take the ball away from Sanju Samson. Even if you don’t take the ball away, you want to keep the line outside the off-stump because his bat face remains closed. When his bat face is closed and he tries to play on the off-side, the bat face opens up at times,” Pathan said on JioHotstar. In the first T20I against Ireland, Samson tried to play on the up and inside-edged the ball onto



the stumps. In the first game against England, he went after a delivery outside the off-stump and was caught at third man. Meanwhile, Sooryavanshi, who grabbed headlines by amassing 776 runs at a staggering strike rate of 237.30 to bag the Player of the Tournament award in IPL 2026 for Rajasthan Royals, is currently eyeing a much-anticipated international debut for India

in the ongoing five-match T20I series against England. Sooryavanshi was unused in Ireland as India suffered a shock 2-0 series loss. “In my opinion, in the history of the IPL, perhaps after Virat Kohli’s season when he scored so many runs, if one season can be defined, it is Vaibhav Sooryavanshi’s IPL 2026.” Former cricketer Saba Karim expressed confidence in his potential to

make huge runs, citing his impressive achievements against top-quality bowlers in Indian conditions. Not just Indian fans, but the entire globe, are expecting to watch Vaibhav Sooryavanshi perform in the same way that he did in the IPL. I have big expectations for this young kid. We shall soon see him in all three configurations. “I am dead sure,” Karim said.

Delhi Traffic Police seeks relocation of 7 MCD toll plazas to ease congestion

New Delhi, July 03: Faced with daily traffic jams on key arterial roads in east Delhi, the Delhi Traffic Police has written to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) urging it to relocate seven toll plazas to locations that do not obstruct traffic flow, according to at least two senior police officers familiar with the situation.

On June 30, K Ramesh, deputy commissioner of police (traffic), addressed a letter to the MCD’s deputy commissioner (toll tax). In the letter, Ramesh proposed moving the toll plazas at Delhi-Noida Direct (DND), Chilla border, Sabhapur border, Ghazipur Uttar Pradesh (UP) Gate, Main National Highway (NH)-24, NH-9, and Noida Mor-Dallupura Road, claiming that they have become major bottlenecks in the eastern range, disrupting traffic on key corridors connecting Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Traffic cops stated the seven toll plazas saw a lot of traffic every day. Manual toll collection, a paucity of toll collecting workers, the occupancy of numerous lanes for toll collection, and delays in issuing monthly passes all contribute to daily congestion and bumper-to-bumper waits, especially during morning and evening peak hours. “Our field inspections revealed that at the DND toll plaza, toll collection workers use two of the three lanes for toll collection, and the reduced carriageway width causes congestion.

Nat Sciver-Brunt and Heather Knight help England set up the Women’s T20 World Cup final against Australia



London: On her comeback from injury, England captain Nat Sciver-Brunt led from the front with a brilliant 75 in a 40-run Women’s T20 World Cup semi-final win against South Africa at the Oval on Thursday. England, called in to bat, crashed to 23-3 after four overs, raising worries of yet another knockout loss in a major tournament. Sciver-Brunt, who had missed the previous three group games due to a calf injury, counter-attacked to the joy of almost 21,000 fans. She received excellent support from former skipper Heather Knight (58) as the two survivors from the last England side to win a major international trophy -- the 2017 50-over World Cup -- turned the tide with a fourth-wicket partnership of 133 that took their team to a total of 169-5. Tournament hosts England will play arch-rivals Australia in Sunday’s final at Lord’s. Both sides have won all six of their matches. A chase of 170 was always going to be a tough task for South Africa and they finished well short on 129-8. “I was probably nervous, the occasion gets quite big as well and so that increased the nerves,” said

Sciver-Brunt, the player of the match, at the presentation ceremony. “I missed a few games (with my injury). There was a lot of emotion pre-game.” She added: “Marizanne Kapp and Shabnim Ismail are world-class opening bowlers who can do some damage. So Heather and I wanted to nullify the threat and make sure we were in and able to capitalise on other bowlers. We used our experience, got out heads together and got the job done.” “We showed composure. We could have tried to go harder earlier and it might not have worked out, so we were really smart.” Kapp took 1-16 in her maximum four overs and Ismail 2-31. But Ayabonga Khaka’s and Nadine de Klerk’s combined seven wicketless overs cost 79 runs. South Africa captain Laura Wolvaardt said her side had been “outplayed”, adding: “We were happy with 170, which we thought was par. They bowled well, had good plans and we weren’t able to step up.” Earlier, South Africa enjoyed a brilliant start by taking three England wickets inside the first four overs. Fast bowler Ismail struck with her first ball, Amy Jones

cutting straight to point. England opener Danni Wyatt-Hodge, whose previous five innings had yielded a tournament record 282 runs at a stellar average of 94, was bowled for just 12 by Kapp’s well-disguised slower ball. England were three down when Alice Capsey was lbw to Ismail. But Sciver-Brunt and Knight, England’s 2017 World Cup-winning skipper, revived the innings. The 33-year-old Sciver Brunt, on her Surrey home ground, completed a fine fifty when she whipped de Klerk through midwicket for a ninth four in 35 balls faced. Knight, 35, slog-swept Khaka for a huge six to go to a 42-ball fifty and Sciver-Brunt also cleared the ropes when hoisting de Klerk over midwicket. Both Sciver-Brunt and Knight fell in the penultimate over to left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba (2-25) but by then the damage had been done. South Africa suffered a major setback in their chase when skipper Wolvaardt was well caught for 17 by a leaping Sophie Ecclestone at mid-on off spinner Linsey Smith. The Proteas’ 43-1 was quickly transformed into 49-2 when Annerie Dercksen sliced a slower ball from Freya Kemp to point. England then captured the key wicket of Kapp for just five when the all-rounder, trying to turn off-spinner Charlie Dean legside, got a leading edge and gave a gentle catch to an elated Sciver-Brunt at extra-cover. South Africa opener Tazmin Brits made fifty at better than a run-a-ball before she fell to Dean.

“Rebuild Or Reaccommodate” Court Investigates Illegal Surat Demolition

Ahmedabad, July 03: The Gujarat High Court requested the state government’s response on Thursday to the “completely illegal” destruction of over 100 residences in Surat’s Narisnagar neighborhood on May 30, which resulted in no prior notice. The High Court questioned the state government’s responsibility to its inhabitants and stated that an investigation should have been conducted at a higher level than the municipal commissioner. Hearing a petition submitted by several aggrieved individuals whose homes were demolished by the Surat Municipal Corporation, Justice Nikhil Kariel inquired as to the government’s position on this “completely illegal” destruction. The High Court also posed an oral question to the police commissioner on absence of complaint and investigation in the matter, despite a DCP level officer being present at the site. In his affidavit, the Surat municipal commissioner told court that a preliminary inquiry carried out by the civic body’s deputy municipal commissioner opined that further inquiry was required as officers concerned

were not coming out with the truth. It added that five officers who were present at the site when demolition was being carried out have been suspended pending departmental proceedings. “What is the state’s stand on this? The inquiry is by the corporation, by a set of officers of the corporation. What is the stand of the state? Is the state not responsible for its citizens?” the court orally questioned the government pleader. The court said it was a case of a large scale demolition, and except for the fact that the petition was filed, even the inquiry report could not have come out any time soon. “A small skirmish here and there, the state is concerned. When such a large scale demolition is taking place, the state is not concerned. The state should definitely be interested in finding out how this happened,” the High Court further said. “This cannot be a one-off incident. If your officer has the audacity to do something like this -- a 100 houses, God knows how much you have done by now which has not yet come out,” it said. The court also asked whether a person’s residence being demolished does

not amount to a penal offence. It questioned the police commissioner over no action being taken taken even when he was informed in writing about the development. “The police would be the first to know that whatever has happened is illegal. Involvement of anyone is for investigation. Where is the investigation? The more time it takes, the signal goes that it is being covered up,” the High Court said. The court also wanted to know as to how the municipal commissioner plans to rehabilitate the people who were rendered homeless due to the “unauthorised demolition.” “Now it is clear that the demolition was illegal. Now the onus is on you to ensure they are rehabilitated. They have to be re-accommodated, either by rebuilding, or through private negotiation, but they have to be given proper accommodation,” it said. In his affidavit, the municipal commissioner stated that the plot belonged to certain private people who wished to develop through third parties, and that a plot validation certificate was requested on March 12 of this year, but was denied.

India series win boosts Ireland’s status in international cricket, says O’Donnell

Mumbai : Cricket Ireland president Bryan O’Donnell believes Ireland’s historic T20I series victory over India has transformed the team’s standing in world cricket, saying the breakthrough will make the side a more attractive opponent for leading nations and pave the way for bigger international opportunities. Ireland stunned reigning T20 world champions India 2-0 in Belfast to register their first-ever bilateral series victory over India in any format. O’Donnell believes the landmark triumph will have an immediate impact on Irish cricket, both on and off the field. “It is going to be fairly instantaneous because it is a huge lift for our players and on that basis, they will probably become available



in other areas of the game,” O’Donnell was quoted as saying by PTL. “It has a huge impact because it elevates the players. It lifts the potential performance of Irish cricket hugely,” he added. According to O’Donnell, the biggest gain from defeating a powerhouse like India will be the shift in how Ireland are perceived internationally. CI think we would be

more acceptable as opposition than we may have been heretofore. It is a moving elevation. “It is showing a return on the level of input that Cricket Ireland are willing to put into the game in this country with the help of the ICC. At present, a large investment is going on into the infrastructure surrounding Irish cricket,” he said. O’Donnell also expects Ire-

land’s participation in the upcoming European T20 Premier League to accelerate the team’s growth while providing players with valuable financial opportunities. “Absolutely. Providing the opposition is of a certain level, it has to be beneficial. It is also opening potential for other income streams for the players at the higher end of the game,” he said. He believes Irish players stand to gain significantly from the presence of cricket greats Steve Waugh, Rahul Dravid and R Ashwin, who will be involved with the tournament. “They will learn from observation. They will learn from meeting these legends and picking their brains and possibly pick up tips for the benefit of our players.

Wimbledon: Turkey’s Zeynep Sonmez steals spotlight with unique symbol on her racket

New Delhi: Turkish tennis player Zeynep Sonmez made a symbolic statement at Wimbledon 2026 after tournament organisers reportedly refused to allow her to wear a brooch in support of Palestine. Instead, the world No. 65 carried a watermelon-shaped vibration dampener on her racket, a subtle emblem that has come to represent Palestinian solidarity because it features the same colours as the Palestinian flag. The 24-year-old disclosed the issue after her second-round defeat to American Claire Liu, explaining that she had spoken with Wimbledon officials but was told the brooch could not be worn during the Championships. While the pin was not permitted, Sonmez said there were no objections to the watermelon symbol on her racket, allowing her to express her support in a differ-



ent way.Sonmez said she had previously worn the brooch at WTA tournaments before being asked not to do so. She further claimed that symbols expressing support for Ukraine had been allowed while the Palestine emblem was prohibited, although Wimbledon has not publicly commented on that assertion. “I used to wear a pin. Tournaments no longer allow me to wear it. We had a discussion with the organisers because the Ukrainian flag is

allowed but the Palestinian is not,” Sonmez told Turkey news agency Anadolu after the match. “They ultimately told us they definitely would not allow it. So, I can’t wear the pin. I can use the vibration dampener, and they can’t object to that. That’s why I put the watermelon symbol on my racket,” she said. The watermelon has become a globally recognised symbol of solidarity with Palestinians, particularly in contexts where

displaying the Palestinian flag has been restricted. Featuring the same red, green, white and black colours as the Palestinian flag, the fruit has increasingly been used in protests, artwork and public campaigns as an alternative symbol of support. Sonmez has been vocal about the issue in the past. Speaking to the WTA in 2024, she said she wanted to use her platform to raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, adding that although athletes could not resolve conflicts, they could still help bring attention to them. “It’s a sensitive area for me. People in Palestine are suffering. I see the videos and photos and feel that there’s not so much we can do. But we can always do our best – it’s like I was saying, you can be the best version of yourself. I want everything with them,” Sonmez had said.

Badminton: India’s Canada Open campaign ends after Aakarshi and Tanya crash out

Toronto: India’s campaign at the Canada Open 2026 came to an end after Aakarshi Kashyap and Tanya Hemanth suffered second-round defeats in the women’s singles event at the BWF Super 300 tournament in Markham, Ontario, according to Olympics.com. World No. 71 Aakarshi Kashyap put up a spirited fight against fourth seed and world No. 33 Beiwen Zhang of the United States before going down 20-22, 21-17, 21-17 in a contest that lasted one hour and seven minutes. Aakarshi made a bright start to the match, opening up a 10-6 lead in the first game. However, Zhang fought back to level the scores before edging a closely contested opening game. The Indian responded strongly throughout the match but was unable to capitalise on key moments. The second game saw Zhang surge into a commanding lead before Aakarshi mounted a late comeback. Despite narrowing the deficit, she could not prevent the American from forcing a decider. The final game remained evenly poised until 17-17, after which Zhang won four consecutive points to seal the match. The defeat marked Aakarshi’s third loss to Zhang in as many meetings, according to Olympics.com.In the other women’s singles second-round match, world No.



56 Tanya Hemanth was outclassed by Japan’s third seed and world No. 21 Riko Gunji, who registered a convincing 21-11, 21-11 victory in just 31 minutes. The result also marked Tanya’s second successive defeat to Gunji after the Japanese shuttler had eliminated her in the opening round of last week’s US Open. Aakarshi and Tanya were India’s last remaining representatives in the tournament after the rest of the contingent exited earlier in the competition, according to Olympics.com. Former world No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth was forced to retire

hurt during his match against Malaysia’s Olympic medallist Lee Zii Jia, while Devika Sihag, Rakshit Ramraj, Anmol Kharb, Shriyanshi Valishetty, Saneeth Dayanand and Sankar Subramanian were all eliminated in the early rounds. India’s challenge in the doubles competition also ended on the opening day after Achutaditya Rao Doddavara-pu and Arjun Reddy Pochana were knocked out. The Indian shuttlers will next be seen in action at the Japan Open 750, scheduled to begin on July 14. Puneeth Suresh and Deepti Raj Adi-

ti were then taken the distance by Mustafa Malikzhan and Kuleshova but they managed to eke out a 11-10 win to take the score to 22-15. The Indians then dominated the next three categories to win the first set. The second set then turned out to be a cakewalk as none of the players conceded more than six points in any of the matches. Meanwhile, Thailand Masters winner Devika Sihag upset third seed Riko Gunji of Japan, while Rounak Chouhan continued his dream run to reach the semifinals of the US Open badminton tournament here.

Liverpool pay tribute to Diogo Jota and Andre Silva on first death anniversary

Liverpool: Liverpool have paid an emotional tribute to former Portugal forward Diogo Jota and his brother Andre Silva on the first anniversary of their deaths, remembering their legacy both on and off the football pitch. In a post on X, the Premier League club reflected on the impact the two brothers had on football and the lives of those who knew them, saying their memory continues to live on despite the immense loss felt by their families, friends and supporters. “Today, as every day, we remember Diogo Jota and Andre Silva, who tragically passed away one year ago.



Through immeasurable loss and incalculable pain, the impact they made and the legacies they left behind - not only within the footballing world, but in the hearts and minds of so many around the world - has shone through over the last 12 months,” Liverpool wrote on X. The club also extended its continued support to the families and loved ones of the two brothers, reaffirming that Jota remains a cherished figure in Liverpool’s history.

“All of our love, support, thoughts and prayers continue to be with Diogo and Andre’s families, friends and all those whose lives were touched by them. Forever in our hearts, forever our number 20,” the club added.Jota represented Liverpool with distinction during his time at Anfield, earning admiration for his goalscoring ability, work rate and commitment. His contributions to both club and country made him one of Portugal’s leading footballers of his generation, while his passing left the football community in

mourning. Earlier, Liverpool unveiled a permanent memorial at Anfield in honour of forward Diogo Jota and his brother Andre Silva on the eve of the first anniversary of their tragic deaths, creating a lasting place of remembrance for supporters and visitors alike.The memorial, titled “Forever 20”, has been installed on 97 Avenue outside Anfield, the same area where thousands of fans gathered to leave flowers, scarves, banners and heartfelt tributes following the brothers’ deaths last year, according to Reuters.

Ronaldo Defends Portugal Future: “I Don’t Make Reckless Decisions”



Toronto: Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo has said he will decide on his international future only after the conclusion of the FIFA World Cup 2026, dismissing speculation over his retirement following Portugal’s victory over Croatia, according to FOX Sports. Speaking after Portugal’s thrilling 2-1 win over Croatia in the Round of 32 on Thursday (local time), Ronaldo said he was focused solely on the tournament and would take a decision on his future only after Portugal’s campaign comes to an end. “I don’t make reckless decisions,”

Ronaldo said after Portugal’s win over Croatia on Thursday (local time), as quoted by FOX Sports “I will decide after the tournament, not now,” the 41-year-old great added. During the clash, Ronaldo etched his name into the history books by becoming the oldest player to score in a FIFA World Cup knockout match. The 41-year-old reached the milestone at the age of 41 years and 147 days, surpassing the previous record for the oldest goalscorer in a World Cup knockout fixture. Interestingly, it is also the first-ever goal in Knockout matches

for Al-Nassr captain Ronaldo, who is featuring in his record sixth FIFA World Cup. Ronaldo scored from the penalty spot in the 67th minute after a VAR review awarded Portugal a spot-kick, cancelling out Ivan Perisic’s opener for Croatia and bringing Roberto Martinez’s side level. The legendary footballer was also named Player of the Match for his superb performance throughout the match. Portugal secured a dramatic 2-1 comeback victory over Croatia in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 32, with substitute Goncalo Ramos heading home a

stoppage-time winner to send Roberto Martinez’s side into the Round of 16. Croatia had taken the lead through Ivan Perisic, who became the country’s all-time leading World Cup scorer, before Cristiano Ronaldo equalised from the penalty spot after a VAR review. Croatia had two goals ruled out for offside, including a late equaliser deep into stoppage time, as Portugal held on to set up an all-Iberian Round of 16 clash against Spain. The match also marked the end of Luka Modric’s potential World Cup career. “From the information I have, he can say goodbye. Enjoy it while it lasts. It’s not today that he’s saying goodbye, but it’s soon,” Katia was quoted as saying by FotMob. “I believe this is his farewell. Enjoy it a lot. It will be difficult to find someone like him,” she added, as quoted by FotMob. Asked whether Ronaldo would retire after reaching the milestone of 1,000 career goals, Katia clarified that she was referring specifically to his Portugal career.”After 1,000 goals? Yes, that’s something.

Oriental Cup 2026 set for biggest edition yet, starts July 7 with bigger prize pool



New Delhi: The Oriental Cup, one of Delhi-NCR’s fastest-growing inter-school football tournaments, officially announced the dates for its fourth edition during a press conference held here on Wednesday, according to a release. The tournament will be held from July 7 to July 16 at the Dr. Ambedkar Stadium, bringing together 45+ teams from leading schools across Delhi-NCR. Marking another significant milestone in its journey, the organisers announced that the overall prize pool has been more than doubled, making it the highest in the tournament’s history. In another major initiative aimed at supporting young talent,

the Oriental Cup also introduced a Rs 2.5 lakh scholarship programme that will benefit 10 deserving student-athletes, reinforcing its commitment to nurturing the next generation of footballers both on and off the field.Oriental Cup 2026 is expected to feature over 1500 participants representing more than 45 teams, with over 50 matches scheduled across the tournament with 25+ teams in the Boys’ Under-17 category and 16+ teams in the Girls’ Under-19 category, ensuring schools have greater opportunities to compete while maintaining a high standard of football throughout the tournament. Announcing the fourth edi-

tion, Fareed Bakshi, Founder, Oriental Cup, said, “Every edition of the Oriental Cup is about creating more opportunities for young footballers. This year, we have more than doubled the tournament’s prize pool and introduced a Rs 2.5 lakh scholarship programme for 10 deserving student-athletes, reinforcing our commitment to recognising and supporting young talent. We are equally encouraged by the remarkable growth in girls’ participation, with the number of girls’ teams doubling since our inaugural edition and now accounting for nearly 40 per cent of all participating teams. These milestones strengthen our belief that

we are moving in the right direction as we work towards building the Oriental Cup into one of India’s most respected inter-school football tournaments.” One of the defining features of the Oriental Cup has been its emphasis on creating equal opportunities for girls alongside boys. Building on this momentum, the organisers aim to further expand girls’ participation in the coming years while continuing to strengthen the overall grassroots football ecosystem. The tournament has continued to attract support from organisations that share its vision of promoting grassroots sport and youth development. The fourth edition will be supported by Oriental Structural Engineers Pvt. Ltd. as the title sponsor, with Nivia Sports as the Football Partner and Ocean Beverages as the Hydration Partner and Central Park Resorts as an Associate Partner. Since its inception in 2023, the Oriental Cup has steadily grown into a prominent platform for school football, offering structured competition for both boys and girls while promoting sportsmanship, discipline, and holistic athlete development.