

First district-level digital grievance redressal portal launched in Meghalaya

Shillong, July 30: Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong on Wednesday said every district should have a dedicated digital platform to address public grievances as he inaugurated the East Khasi Hills district portal, the first such initiative in the state. Residents can lodge complaints through the portal or submit them through Gram Sevaks, who will forward them to the respective Block Development Officers (BDOs). Launching the portal, de-ekh. in at the conference hall of

the Deputy Commissioner’s office in Shillong, Tynsong described it as “the beginning of a larger transformation in governance” and said it would provide citizens with a convenient and accessible platform to raise grievances at the individual, village and community levels. “The government is working towards creating an efficient service delivery mechanism that reaches every citizen,” he said, expressing confidence that the initiative would improve administrative responsiveness and public satisfaction. Lauding East Khasi

Hills Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal for conceptualising the portal, Tynsong said the district administration has been introducing several citizen-centric initiatives to make government services more accessible. Tynsong lauded East Khasi Hills Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal for conceptualising and implementing the portal, commending the district administration’s commitment to introducing citizen-centric initiatives that make government services more accessible. He remarked that such innova-



tions are essential to bridge the gap between citizens and the administration, ensuring that grievances are not only

heard but acted upon swiftly. The Deputy CM further highlighted that the portal represents a shift towards digital

governance, aligning with the state’s efforts to modernize administrative processes. By leveraging technology, the government aims to reduce bureaucratic delays, enhance transparency, and foster accountability across departments. He underscored that the success of the East Khasi Hills portal would serve as a model for replication in other districts, thereby institutionalizing grievance redressal mechanisms across Meghalaya. Officials present at the launch explained that the portal will be integrated with existing administrative

workflows, enabling seamless tracking of complaints and ensuring that each grievance is assigned, monitored, and resolved within stipulated timelines. The system will also generate periodic reports to help the administration identify recurring issues and address systemic gaps. Deputy Commissioner Abhilash Baranwal expressed gratitude to the Deputy CM for his support and guidance, noting that the portal was developed with the objective of empowering citizens and strengthening participatory governance. He assured that the district ad-

ministration would continue to innovate and introduce initiatives that bring government services closer to the people. Community representatives attending the launch welcomed the initiative, stating that it would significantly reduce the challenges faced by rural residents in accessing government offices. They emphasized that the portal would empower citizens to hold the administration accountable and ensure that grievances related to infrastructure, health, education, and welfare schemes are addressed promptly.

Assam Congress moves High Court over flood control violations

Guwahati, July 30: Alleging that the devastating flood situation across three districts of Upper Assam is a direct consequence of the State Government’s persistent violation of mandatory legal directives issued by the Gauhati High Court, the Legal Cell of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) has filed a petition seeking the intervention of the Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court. According to the Legal Cell, based on multiple Public Interest Litigations (PILs) and a review petition filed earlier, the High Court had issued clear directives to protect the Dikhow River basin, formulate a master plan, and deploy a Task Force Battalion to curb illegal mining. However, due to gross administrative negligence, these judicial directives were never implemented. Consequently, unregulated mechanized mining destroyed the natural ecological defenses



of the rivers, triggering catastrophic floods in Sivasagar, Charaideo, and Jorhat districts. The petition explicitly states that this disaster is not a natural calamity, but a man-made catastrophe resulting from government apathy, complicity in illegal sand and stone mining, and the uncoordinated, sudden release of water from upstream dams in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Furthermore, it brings to the court’s attention that pushing for mega hydroelectric power projects worth Rs 77,353 crore without downstream environmental

safety audits or inter-state early warning systems will condemn the public to perennial flooding. Through this petition, the Congress party demands that instead of token relief, the government must be held liable under the principles of ‘Constitutional Tort’ and ‘Strict Liability’ to provide full restitution to flood victims for loss of homes, crops, and livestock. Additionally, the party demands the implementation of a special rehabilitation project for the Dikhow River basin utilizing District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT) funds.

Governor administers oath to Mizoram Human Rights Commission members

Aizawl, July 30: Mizoram Governor General Vijay Kumar Singh, (Retd.), on Wednesday administered the oath of office to the first Chairperson and Members of the Mizoram State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) at the Durbar Hall, Lok Bhavan, Aizawl. Justice Marli Vankung, former Judge of the Gauhati High Court, was sworn in as Chairperson, while Vanlalenmawia, MJS (Retd.) and Mr K. Lal Nghinglova, IAS (Retd.), took the oath as Members of the Commission. At the commencement of the swearing-in ceremony, Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena read out the notification issued by the Governor appointing the Chairperson and Members of the Mizoram State Human Rights Commission. Thereafter,



Governor General Singh administered the oath of office to Justice Marli Vankung, Vanlalenmawia and K. Lal Nghinglova. The ceremony was attended by Chief Minister Lalduhoma, Speaker Lalbiakzama, PWD Minister Vanlalhlana, EF&CC Minister Lal-

thansanga, Leader of the Opposition Lalthandama Ralte, P&E Minister F. Rodingliana, IPRP&S Minister B. Lalthanzova and other distinguished guests. Justice Marli Vankung was born on March 4, 1964.

She holds a B.A. (English Hons), LL.B. and M.Phil. (International Legal Studies). She joined the Mizoram Judicial Service in 1989 and held several important positions in the Government of Mizoram before being elevated as

an Additional Judge of the Gauhati High Court on October 13, 2021. She was appointed as a permanent Judge on August 1, 2023 and retired on March 3, 2026. She presently resides with her family at Republic Veng, Aizawl.

AJP seeks six-month loan moratorium for Assam flood victims

Guwahati, July 30: The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) has urged the Central Government, the Government of Assam, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and all banks and financial institutions to immediately announce a six-month moratorium on the repayment of all loans and Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) for people affected by the devastating floods in Assam. In a joint statement, AJP president Lurinjoyoti Gogoi and general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan said the unprecedented floods have severely disrupted the lives and livelihoods of lakhs of people across the state. They noted that thousands of families

have lost their homes, agricultural lands, small businesses, livestock and sources of income, pushing them into acute financial distress. Under such extraordinary circumstances, they said, the burden of repaying bank loans, housing loans, vehicle loans, business loans, microfinance loans, self-help group (SHG) loans and other EMIs has become unbearable for flood-affected families. Expressing deep concern over the situation, the party leaders said disasters of this magnitude demand compassionate and people-centric policy decisions. They urged the Central Government, the Assam Government, the RBI, and all banks and financial insti-



tutions to extend immediate financial relief to those strug-

gling to rebuild their lives. The AJP leaders demand-

ed that a moratorium of at least six months be de-

clared on the repayment of all categories of loans and EMIs for all eligible borrowers residing in flood-affected areas of Assam. They further demanded that no late payment charges, penal interest, or any other additional financial penalties should be imposed during the moratorium period. They also called for a special rehabilitation package for farmers, small entrepreneurs, self-help groups and families that have lost their livelihoods due to the floods. The package, they said, should include easy-term credit facilities, concessional loans, and special interest relief to enable affected people to restore

their economic activities. Further, the AJP leaders urged the Reserve Bank of India to issue clear directions to all banks and financial institutions to adopt a humane and sensitive approach towards loan recovery during this calamity. They emphasized that flood-affected borrowers must not be subjected to coercive recovery measures, as such practices would only deepen their suffering. The AJP’s appeal reflects growing public demand for financial relief and rehabilitation in Assam. By calling for a moratorium and special packages, the party has sought to ensure that disaster-hit families are given breathing space to recover and rebuild their lives.

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Tawang DC urges officials to assess and address human resource gaps

Tawang, July 30: The District Task Force for Immunisation (DTFI) meeting was chaired by Tawang Deputy Commissioner, Namgyal Angmo in Tawang on Thursday. During the meeting, the deputy commissioner directed officials to assess gaps in human resource requirements and reviewed infrastructural gaps within the health department across Tawang. The meeting was attended by DMO Dr. TD Namsa, DRCHO Dr. Rinchin Nee-ma, Executive Engineer, DUDA, Phurpa Lamu, DPC ISSE, Dhondup, along with representatives from other line departments, Medical Officers and Health and Wellness Officers from across the district. The DRCHO presented the cur-



rent status of immunisation coverage in the district. The DMO called for collective efforts to make Tawang the best-performing district in the state, directing all medical officers to present centre-wise status reports

and take ownership from the next DTFI meeting onwards. DMO Dr. TD Namsa called for collective responsibility, urging all medical officers to take ownership of their respective centres. He directed them to present cen-

tre-wise status reports and ensure accountability from the next DTFI meeting onwards. Dr. Namsa stressed that with committed teamwork, Tawang can emerge as the best-performing district in the state in terms of

immunisation coverage. The Deputy Commissioner’s directive to assess human resource and infrastructure gaps reflects the administration’s proactive approach to strengthening healthcare delivery. By combining accountability, transparency, and collective effort, the district aims to set a benchmark in immunisation performance and public health management. Officials reiterated that the DTFI will continue to serve as a platform for reviewing progress, identifying challenges, and implementing corrective measures. The administration remains committed to ensuring that every child in Tawang receives timely and complete immunisation, thereby contributing to the state’s broader health goals.

Meghalaya Tourism hosts ‘Achiever of the Month’ in Tura

Shillong, July 30: The Meghalaya Tourism department organised the ‘Achiever of the Month’ programme with the theme ‘CM-MGMP’ at the Chief Minister’s Residence in Tura on Wednesday. During the programme, Chegim Durama from the Garo Hills region was conferred the “Achiever of the Month, Music Edition” Award. The event was hosted by Meghalaya Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Shri Conrad K Sangma and was graced by various official dignitaries. The programme commenced with a brief overview of the “Achievers of the Month, Music Edition” and the achievements and impact of the Chief Minister’s Meghalaya Grassroots Music Project (CM-MGMP). As part of the ceremony,



Certificates of Appreciation were presented to 15 short-listed CM-MGMP groups. From among the 15, the highest-performing artist or group from each of the three regions was further selected for the CM-MGMP Special Award. The recipients of the Special Award were ‘Larger than 90’ from Jaintia Hills, ‘Leo

Boys’ from Khasi Hills, and ‘Chegim Durama’ from Garo Hills. These three regional achievers were then assessed through the CM-MGMP Tier System to identify the recipient of the “Achiever of the Month – Music Edition” Award, which was conferred upon Chegim Durama from the Garo Hills region.

NPP has dismissed claims of being silent regarding the FCRA bill matter

Shillong, July 30: Meghalaya's ruling National People's Party (NPP) on Wednesday dismissed allegations that it had remained silent over the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, maintaining that it has been at the forefront of efforts to safeguard the interests of religious and minority institutions in the Northeast.

"The NPP condemns these unverified claims, which originate from opportunistic political rivals

known only for creating loud noise and confusion to score cheap political points," NPP national working president, James Sangma said.

Sangma claims that the NPP is the only political party from the region that has made a robust, decisive assertion at the highest levels of the Union Government to safeguard religious and minority institutions.

Sangma, who is also the member of Rajya Sabha representing Meghalaya, said, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma had personally led a high-level, multi-denominational delegation of senior church and community leaders to New Delhi earlier this month

to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah regarding the proposed amendments to the FCRA. The delegation included prominent representatives from the Presbyterian Church of India, the North East India Christian Council (NEICC), the Catholic Archdiocese of Shillong, and the Garo Baptist Convention. During the meeting, the Chief Minister formally placed the state's deep concerns regarding Section 16A (5) and other restrictive provisions of the FCRA Bill before the Union Home Minister. The delegation urged the Centre to prevent disruptions to vital education, healthcare, and social welfare services.

Sangma claimed that the Union Home Minister Amit Shah had explicitly assured the delegation that extensive stakeholder consultations would be held.

Further, the NPP leader also recalled that the Chief Minister Sangma accompanied by State Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong and representatives of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), met Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju over the proposed FCRA.

"The NPP does not believe in empty rhetoric or performative shouting. The party believes in constructive, high-level engagement to deliver real protection," Sangma said. Stating that the NPP remains unconditionally committed to the cause of our citizens, Sangma said, "Whenever an issue impacts the interests, rights, or well-being of our people and social institutions, the NPP will always be the first and most effective voice to speak up."



Mizoram establishes its inaugural State Human Rights Commission

Shillong, July 30: Mizoram has established its inaugural State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), with Governor Vijay Kumar Singh administering the oath of office to its chairperson and two members on Wednesday, according to officials.

Former Gauhati High Court judge Justice (retd) Marli Vankung was sworn in as the commission's first chairperson during a ceremony at Raj Bhavan, while retired Mizoram Judicial Service officer Vanlalenmawia and retired IAS officer K Lal Nghinglova took their oaths as members, officials reported.

Among those present at the swearing-in ceremony were Chief Minister Lalduhoma, Speaker Lalbiakzama, Leader of the Opposition Lalthhandama Ralte, and various cabinet ministers.

Justice Vankung, born in



1964, possesses degrees in English, Law, and International Legal Studies. She commenced her career in the Mizoram Judicial Service in 1989 and held various judicial roles before her appointment as an additional judge of the Gauhati High Court in October 2021. She became a permanent judge in August 2023 and retired in March of this year, officials noted.

Vanlalenmawia, born in 1966, entered the Mizoram Judicial Service in 2011 and held several judicial positions before retiring in March 2026 as the Presiding Officer of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal in Aizawl, according to officials. Nghinglova, born in 1956, began his professional journey as a district information and public relations officer in 1983 before joining the IAS (AGMUT cadre) in 1996. He held nu-

merous senior administrative roles in both Mizoram and Delhi, including serving as principal secretary to the Mizoram government, before retiring in November 2016. The commission was established following directives from the Gauhati High Court, where the Zofa Welfare Organisation (ZWO) had submitted a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) concerning its formation.

Peren farmers sharpen livestock and poultry skills at training event



Kohima, July 30: The District Management Unit of Peren, working under the Nagaland Forest Management Project, teamed up with ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra to host a livestock and poultry training workshop. The event took place at the Council Hall in Peren Village on July 27. It focused on the theme of Nurturing Sustainable Growth for Progressive Future.

Dr. L. Babita Devi, the Chief Technical Officer for Animal Science at KVK Peren, led the instruction. She pushed farmers to track farm records to watch their profit margins. She ex-

plained the technical details of pig-gery management, including breed improvement through crossbreeding, care for piglets, and disease control. She told the group, "Farmers were advised to maintain biosecurity, especially during the disease prone months of February and March, and to isolate infected birds to prevent spread."

Devi also covered vaccination schedules, hygiene, and insurance options offered by the National Rural Livelihood Mission. She provided updates on the African Swine Fever

vaccine. Regarding poultry, she outlined backyard breeds and proper nutritional management. Mateichile opened the session with a prayer, while Liangsi Niumai, Team Leader at FNGO C CERP, gave the welcome address. Field coordinator Mosonio Chachei led an interactive talk on local challenges. Khuni Newmai, the Convergence Expert, gathered feedback from the attendees. Suibamle, secretary of the Kesamsang SHG, gave the final vote of thanks, and SHG representative Heilam ended the day with a closing prayer.

Conrad Sangma Defends Fund Distribution

Shillong, July 30: Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma spoke in Tura on Wednesday regarding the Chief Minister's Special Development Fund. The government created this fund to back small, high-impact projects throughout the state. It relies on the Chief Minister's Secretariat budget to fix local issues that actually matter to residents. Money flows through the Office of the Deputy Commissioner following standard procedures.

Public demand remains high. The

government must stretch its limited budget across every single constituency. Sangma noted, "The high demand for assistance has required the government to ensure equitable distribution across all regions within the available budget." He emphasized that state officials are working to deliver these same benefits to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

The Chief Minister also attended an event at his Tura home to celebrate the Achiever of the Month. This honor falls under the Chief Minister's Meghalaya



Grassroots Music Programme. He continues to push for development across all regions of the state.

Shillong Peak ropeway complies with all environmental, safeguards: MRDA

Shillong, July 30: The Meghalaya government on Tuesday said that the proposed Shillong Peak Ropeway Cable Car project is being implemented with full statutory approvals and strict environmental and community safeguards, following concerns raised by a group of citizens, mostly led by women. In a statement, the Joint Chief Executive Officer of Meghalaya Ropeway Development Authority (MRDA) reiterated government's commitment to balancing development with environmental conservation. The MRDA assured that the government will continue to engage with stakeholders in a transparent and responsible manner throughout the implementation of the project. "Protecting Meghalaya's natural heritage while creating sustainable opportunities for its people continues to remain a guiding principle of the government's tourism development strategy," the MRDA assured. On Monday, a group of citizens, mostly women, visited the ropeway site at Riat Laban and expressed their resentment over the destruction of the area after seeing trees being felled to facilitate the project. The residents feared that the ropeway project would affect local drinking water sources and cause severe environmental damage from large-scale tree felling. However, the MRDA said that the project has been taken up only after obtaining all permissions relating to environmental safeguards, following national laws and international best practices.

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has approved the diversion of 2.3257 hectares of forest land to the Forest Department for Compensatory Tree Plantation in compliance

with the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 for diversion of forest land. Permission to fell 544 trees was also obtained after they were duly marked for the Rs. 151 crore Shillong Peak Ropeway Cable Car project which

received no-objection certificates from the Airports Authority of India, the Indian Air Force, and the Indian Army. The Shillong Peak Ropeway Cable Car will be 896 m long and will have lower and upper terminal points, 13 cabins and has been designed as per CEN



is funded by the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Union Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) Scheme. Out of the Rs. 151 crores, the NDB is funding Rs. 80.89 crore and the remaining Rs. 70.11 Crore by the DoNER ministry, the MRDA said, adding that the construction work began on October 15, 2025, following National and International Safeguard Standards (Environment & Social). The project has also

(European) standards. "The project will not only improve tourists' commuting experience, but will also contribute to increased employment and livelihood opportunities for the local community," the MRDA said. Moreover, they said the project will also result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) through the replacement of road travel by the ropeway. The project has been developed by the Tourism Department in partnership with the Rait Laban Dorbar Pyllun, which has agreed to lease the land for the project.

ATTSA alleges flood-hit villages yet to receive government

Doomdooma, July 30: The Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA), Doomdooma Regional Committee, on Thursday alleged that several flood-affected villages and tea garden areas in Assam's Sivasagar district have not received any relief from the government or district administration despite widespread damage.

The allegation came after an ATTSA delegation visited Chontok Tea Estate, Hanuman Tea Estate, Bamunpukhuri Tea Estate, Nepalkhuti village and

the Chikri bridge area to distribute relief materials to affected residents. "Our team witnessed heartbreaking scenes of devastation. The people told us they have not received any assistance from either the government or the district administration till now. Families are struggling to survive in extremely difficult conditions, and the absence of official relief has deepened their suffering," said ATTSA Doomdooma Regional Committee president Irot Tanti.

According to the organisation, the delegation found

many flood-affected families living in difficult conditions and trying to recover from the damage caused by the floods. ATTSA distributed relief materials but said voluntary efforts alone are not enough to meet the needs of the affected communities. The organisation urged the authorities to assess the situation and ensure relief reaches every affected household without delay.

"We appeal to the government and the administration to stand beside the flood-affected people during this humanitarian crisis. These

vulnerable communities urgently need relief, rehabilitation and sustained support. No disaster-hit family should be left waiting for basic assistance," Tanti added. The relief drive was carried out with the support of ATTSA Tinsukia district leaders, ATTWA representatives, members of the Doomdooma Regional Committee and volunteers from several local units. The organisation thanked those who supported the relief drive and reiterated its demand for immediate government intervention in the worst-affected areas.

The head of the Maharashtra Food Safety Body is complaining about a staff shortage

Mumbai, July 30: Due to a serious staffing shortage, twenty-nine workers of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Maharashtra have claimed they are being compelled to work double shifts. The workers at a laboratory in Chhatrapati filed a formal complaint against Tukaram Mundhe, the commissioner of the food safety board. According to Sambhajinagar, the quality and accuracy of the analysis are being directly jeopardized by the extreme pressure to expeditiously clear pending food, medication, and cosmetic samples. They claimed that adequate testing necessitates enough time, which is currently unachievable due to the heavy workload and a lack of cleaning personnel, laboratory assistants, and other essential support staff. The laboratory's office hours are set from 9:45 AM to 6:15 PM in accordance with current Maharashtra government policy. However, in accordance with the Honorable Commissioner's orders, laboratory op-

erations have been carried out in two shifts for the past month: 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM and 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM. On July 15, they wrote to Maharashtra FDA Minister Narhari Zirwal, saying, "Staff and officers have been ordered to attend the office every Saturday." They stated, "Instructions have been issued prohibiting the availability of any leave without prior permission." According to them, an analyst can often only complete a quality examination of 12 to 14 drug samples per month.

According to the FSSAI recommendation titled "Standards Specifications for Setting up of Basic Food Laboratory (2021)" regarding the food testing laboratory, a single analyst can analyze an average of 40 to 50 food samples each month, depending on the manpower and resources available. In actuality, the laboratory's existing analysis capacity is exceeded by the quantity of food and drug samples received by food safety officers and drug inspectors. This results

in a growing backlog of unfinished samples and makes it challenging to finish sample analysis on time, they said. Increasing the number of analysts in the labs was crucial, they claimed, in order to "reduce the backlog and ensure timely analysis." It is not practically possible to work efficiently in two shifts. In these situations, merely instituting a two-shift system or extending working hours does not ensure a corresponding rise in the volume of sample analysis, they stated. The lack of a weekly rest day and the increasing effort, according to them, are "adversely affecting their mental and physical health." Difficulties are also arising in fulfilling family responsibilities, which is likely to impact employee efficiency and, consequently, the quality of work within the laboratory," they stated. The FDA has been launching a significant campaign against food joint operators who violate safety regulations throughout the state, which coincides with the complaint against Mundhe.

Six Months, Two Stints: Bihar Is Asked by the Supreme Court How an Unelected Minister Can Continue

New Delhi, July 30: The Bihar government has been asked by the Supreme Court to explain how a minister is staying in office after a stipulated six-month term without being elected. A case contesting Bihar minister Deepak Prakash's six-month tenure despite not being elected is being heard by the court. The Bihar administration was asked the question on Thursday by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant. This is only a legal issue. The CJJ stated, "The State will have to explain how a minister is continuing for more than six months without being elected." The case is scheduled for an urgent hearing before the court on August 4. The problem stems from Deepak Prakash, the Bihar Panchayati Raj Minister, continuing to serve without being elected. Before Chief Minister Nitish Kumar resigned on April 15, 2026, Prakash held the position of Minister of Panchayati Raj for four months and twenty-six days. For the next twenty-two days, he was not in a ministerial position. Despite not being elected, Prakash was once more sworn in as a minister on May 7 following the formation of a new administration by Samrat Choudhary. The petition, which was submitted on May 30, claims that his appointment is "a fraud upon the Constitution" and asks for its invalidation. Without being elected to either House, Prakash



has already been in office for a total of more than six months. Ministers nominated by the Prime Minister or a Chief Minister are given a grace period of six months to be elected under Article 164(4). It states: "A Minister who for any period of six consecutive months is not a member of the Legislature of the State shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a Minister." Therefore, if a minister is not elected within six months, they are required to resign. However, Prakash's situation is unique because he hasn't held office for a consecutive six months. He served as minister under Nitish Kumar for four months and twenty-six days, falling within the six-month grace period. He has just been in office for a few months after Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary reappointed him. All things considered, however, he has served as a minister for over six months without

being elected. The Supreme Court is faced with an intriguing legal challenge as a result. Ministers and chief ministers appointed without a seat in the assembly have frequently cited Article 164(4). In order for the minister to run in a by-election, it is customary to have an elected lawmaker in a "safe seat" step down. In various instances, ministers and chief ministers have utilized the Legislative Council to meet the requirement of being elected within six months. Notably, Uddhav Thackeray assumed the position of Maharashtra's chief minister in 2019 without being an MLA, later securing a seat in the Legislative Council. Similarly, Tirath Singh Rawat in Uttarakhand resigned shortly before the six-month deadline due to challenges in holding a by-election amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda also followed this route by getting elected to the Rajya Sabha post-premiership. While the practice of ministers being elected after taking office is not uncommon, the question arises whether the six-month grace period can be invoked more than once for the same minister, specifically if a minister resigns before the deadline and re-assumes office to reset the six-month period. The Supreme Court's ruling in the Deepak Prakash case is anticipated to provide clarity on this legal ambiguity.

In a corruption case, the HC denies former Tamil Nadu minister Balaji anticipatory bail

New Delhi, July 30: In a corruption case that the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) filed against former Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji, the Madras High Court denied anticipatory bail on Thursday. The court stated that the allegations against Balaji involved a loss of more than ₹17 crore to the public exchequer and necessitated custodial interrogation. After the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) government contended that the purported ₹17 crore loss was merely the tip of the iceberg and that the true damage to the exchequer could reach ₹100 crore, Justice GK Ilanthiraiyan dismissed Balaji's appeal for protection from arrest. In order to fully uncover the scope of the alleged violations,

custodial interrogation was necessary, public prosecutor R John Sathyan informed the court. The DVAC expanded its investigation into alleged corruption within the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) on Wednesday. The DVAC filed a new lawsuit against Balaji and six other people after searching 41 places throughout the state. Additionally, it listed former TASMAC managing director S Visakan, former ministerial assistant Bhaskar, former senior regional managers T Rama Durai Murugan and R Panneer Selvam, and private people. S Karthik and Rathesh Raj Shanmugavel as co-defendants. Investigators claimed that the government suffered significant losses as a result of district and regional TASMAC

officials manipulating tenders for bars and transport contracts, favoring particular bids, allowing cartelization among applicants, and permitting bars to operate despite expired licenses. Bar tenders in Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode, Namakkal, the Nilgiris, and Karur were allegedly erratic, according to the agency. It said that rather than holding new tenders when necessary, officials conspired with bar owners. The agency claimed that one applicant's earnest money deposit demand drafts were used improperly to alter transport contracts for 45 TASMAC depots. Unused demand drafts were allegedly redirected to assist other transport providers in obtaining contracts, according to investigators. According to the DVAC,

Alleged Punjab Paper Leaks Cause BJP Protests Outside AAP Delhi Office



New Delhi, July 30: The state's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has been the target of allegations of exam paper leaks in Punjab, which have reached the nation's capital. BJP politicians and employees have protested outside the AAP's office, demanding a probe and responsibility. Because of the demonstration, a lot of police officers have been stationed at the AAP office. The AAP was one of the opposition parties in the Center that supported demonstrators in Delhi's Jantar Mantar and attacked the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) administration over the NEET paper leak. It currently plays the opposite role, with the

BJP claiming that numerous exam paper leaks occurred in Punjab during Bhagwant Mann's administration. The protest outside the AAP's office today was spearheaded by Delhi BJP chairman Harsh Malhotra, MPs, and senior party leaders. They chanted chants denouncing the Punjab government for supposedly ruining many students' futures. Kewal Singh Dhillon, the head of the Punjab BJP, claimed earlier today that the AAP government has not addressed the state's purported paper leak problem and called for the immediate resignation of the ministers of education and health. "I have previously stated that they are dishonest.

They act in one way while saying another. Everyone is aware of the paper's leak. Dhillon stated that the state's ministers of education and health ought to step down right away. BJP MPs protested on the grounds of the house on Tuesday as well, demanding that Punjab Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains resign due to the purported document leak in the state. In addition, Shiromani Akali Dal MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal criticized the AAP and requested that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) look into 11 purported test scams that occurred in Punjab during the AAP's rule. The Punjab Teacher Eligibility Test, the Class 12 English exam, and the pharmacy officer test are among the six paper leaks that the Akali Dal claims have impacted thousands of candidates in the state. The Congress claimed on Monday that the AAP government in Punjab was responsible for at least four paper leaks. Every accusation has been refuted by the Bhagwant Mann administration.

On top of the Jaipur water tank, NSUI leaders start an indefinite hunger strike

New Delhi, July 30: On Thursday, three leaders of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of the Opposition Congress, started an indefinite hunger strike atop a water tank in Jaipur, calling for the reinstatement of student union elections in Rajasthan and the prosecution of those who used excessive force against demonstrators during the July 20 Parliament march against examination irregularities. The strike's leader, Viona Jat, accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of stifling democratic rights by declining to hold student union elections. She claimed that a "Hitlerian mindset" was evident in the police response to students demonstrating "in a Gandhian manner" in Delhi. Rajasthan's last student union elections took place in 2022, but they were halted by the Congress administration led by then-chief minister Ashok Gehlot. Since the BJP administration came to power in 2023, the suspension has persisted. At the start of each new school year, calls for student union elections have reappeared. For eight days, student activist Shubham Rewad has been holding a sit-in at Rajasthan University's main gate to demand that student union elections be held again. Gehlot referred to the state government's and the university administration's unwillingness to start a conversation as callous, citing Rewad's sit-in. He stated on X, "Since the state government has jurisdiction over both issues, it should intervene immediately and find a positive resolution." Congress leader Sachin Pilot also backed the protesters, calling it unfortunate that the government and the university administration are turning a blind eye to genuine concerns instead of listening to the voice of the youth. "The government should show sensitivity and initiate dialogue immediately," Pilot said. Dharmendra Pradhan, the Union's minister of education, tendered his resignation on Saturday after weeks of demonstrations alleging anomalies in exams that stalled central Delhi and galvanized the opposition. Pradhan's resignation marked the first occasion in the three periods of the National Democratic Alliance government that a popular public protest compelled a Union minister to resign. It happened a few days after students joined what turned out to be the biggest street demonstrations of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term despite police barricading. Police have come under fire for allegedly using excessive force to scatter the demonstrators.

The Naga Council fully supports the NIA's investigation into the murders of three pastors in Manipur

New Delhi, July 30: The president of the United Naga Council (UNC), NG Lorho, stated that the council would fully assist the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in its investigation into the murders of three pastors in Manipur. He also urged the central agency to move quickly in its investigation into the deaths of six Naga men, cautioning that prolonged inaction could escalate the ongoing Naga agitation. Following the NIA's recording of his statement in Senapati on Tuesday regarding the ambush on church leaders in Kangpokpi district on May 13, Lorho stated that the UNC had promised investigators its assistance. "We welcome the NIA representatives and offer our complete assistance in whatever manner we can to the inquiry into the three pastors' murders and targeted ambush. Simultaneously, we requested that NIA officers take the matter

of the six Naga men killed by Kuki terrorists as seriously as possible. As of right present, the administration has yet to take any concrete action. As a result, the Naga people might step up their activities outside of the current economic blockade.

Both the Indian government and the Manipur government bear ultimate accountability," Lorho stated.

The NIA on Tuesday recorded Lorho's statement as part of its investigation into the attack on a group of tribal church leaders near the Kotlem-Kotzim stretch of Kangpokpi district on May 13. The church leaders were returning to Kangpokpi after attending a religious gathering in Churachandpur when unidentified armed assailants ambushed their vehicle on the Tiger Road stretch between Kotzim and Kotlen villages. Pastors Paogou and Kaigoulien, who were connected to the Thadou



Baptist Association, as well as Rev. Vumthang Sithhou, the former General Secretary of the Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC), were killed in the attack. The incident caused significant injuries to four more people. Earlier, Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho demanded harsh punishment for KNF-P members who killed six Naga people, including two pastors from Konsakhlul village, who were kidnapped from Leilon Vaiphei on May 13. Losii Dikho described the event as "beyond human belief" and

claimed that the state's citizens and administration were horrified and incensed by the savagery. "We are aware that the KNF-P carried it out. They were the ones who took them," Dikho claimed, claiming that specific women's organizations, members of the local community, and village chairmen were involved in the victims' transfer to armed cadres. "I have nothing to say. The kind of thing they have done is unbelievable. We are unable to find the right words to convey our grief, rage, and anguish," he remarked.

Meta will appear before the government in seven to ten days to discuss policy and technical matters

New Delhi, July 30: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Secretary S Krishnan announced on Thursday that Meta has consented to appear before the government to explain policy and technical issues pertaining to the company. Krishnan stated that the government has requested that Meta send its most senior representatives to explain the circumstances surrounding the issues raised by authorities and to provide clarity at both policy and technical levels. He emphasized that the government wants to understand the issues from both policy and technical perspectives and evaluate how the company can modify its practices to address India's concerns. "Meta, we have asked them to come in at the highest level and explain what is happening and why the kind of issues that we see," he said. Krishnan said the government is currently examining the matter and has sought views from several messaging platforms as part of its assessment. He also said Meta has written to the government expressing regret over the incident and shared its understanding of the

reasons behind it. He responded, "I believe within the next week, ten days," when asked about the schedule for the meta representative. We are investigating that. We have the opinions of several platforms, including messaging platforms," he stated. Regarding the WhatsApp username issue, he stated, "We are investigating. We have the opinions of several platforms, including messaging platforms." Krishnan claims that in order to stop similar occurrences from happening again, Meta notified the government on July 28 that it has implemented new protocols regarding the accounts of notable individuals. "Meta has written to the authorities to apologize for the incident and acknowledge that it occurred. They have also explained to us why they believe it occurred, and they have stated that as of July 28th, they have implemented new procedures pertaining to the accounts of notable individuals in order to prevent future occurrences of this kind." This comes after Meta announced on Tuesday that a technical fault had caused the removal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's



Facebook video on action against test paper leaks. Before it was restored, the video was momentarily inaccessible. "The content was removed in error and has since been restored," a representative for Meta said in a statement. In the early hours of July 28, the Meta-owned social networking platform temporarily blocked access to the video before making it available again. The video, which was initially made public on July 23, was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first direct speech to Generation Z during the 36-day student protests spearheaded by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) over purported anomalies in the NEET-UG 2026 exam.

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The dawn of the Modi-Takaichi partnership



Earlier this month, Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Sanae Takaichi paid her first official visit to India, after assuming office last October. The outcomes of this visit can be captured through two keywords: “strategic convergence” and “younger sister”.

The leaders’ joint statement characterised the relationship between the two nations as a “partnership of strategic convergence and trust for shared growth, prosperity and resilience”. Building on the decade-long progress made under “special strategic and global partnership”, both sides concurred on advancing their strategically convergent partnership. Strategic convergence signifies that the relationship has evolved beyond merely sharing strategic interests. The other keyword is “younger sister”. During this visit, the two leaders concurred to call each other “elder brother” and “younger sister”. At the joint press statement’s opening, PM Narendra Modi warmly called PM Takaichi his “chhoti behen” (younger sister), a memorable moment to which she responded in kind. The two leaders cultivating such a close relationship is one of the greatest achievements of this visit.

Japan’s importance to India rests on three pillars for “Viksit Bharat”: a reliable partner for economic development, a strategic partner for security interests, and a trusted partner rooted in cultural bonds. With the opening of the Takaichi-Modi era, I would like to place priority on five key areas. First, advancing policy coordination across the Indo-Pacific region: The two leaders reiterated the synergy between India’s MAHASAGAR and Japan’s updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). PM Takaichi emphasised that each country must have resilience and capabilities to have freedom to decide for themselves and become stronger and more prosperous together. Aligning perspectives and understanding at all levels and advancing third-country cooperation such as the trilateral Track 1.5 policy dialogue with the Philippines remain crucial. Japan and India may explore more trilateral/minilateral dialogue with third countries in the Indo-Pacific. The two leaders underscored the importance of Quad collaboration and reaffirmed their commitment to cooperating towards an early convening of the next Quad leaders’ summit.

Second, deepening security and defence cooperation,

especially in maritime security: The two countries announced their commitment to advancing defence equipment and technology cooperation under the Make in India initiative and promoting collaboration in areas including naval maintenance, repair, and overhaul. An agreement in principle has also been reached on the technical collaboration regarding the Unified Complex Radio Antenna (UNICORN). Japan and India will steadily advance cooperation in these areas, including through the 2+2 foreign and defence ministerial meeting by the end of this year. Third, expanding practical cooperation on economic security: The two leaders announced the Joint Declaration on Economic Security Cooperation. As India’s first such declaration with any country, it demonstrates our deep bilateral cooperation. The private-sector’s strong interest is driving concrete collaboration across five key areas: semiconductors, critical minerals, ICT, clean energy, and pharmaceuticals. We will continue to promote concrete projects in areas such as semiconductors, AI, and clean energy. Alongside government-to-government and business-to-business dialogues, a new Track 1.5 Dialogue will further institutionalise our economic security cooperation. Fourth, promoting concrete industrial and innovation initiatives: We are steadily progressing toward the 10-trillion-yen Japanese investment in India target, with 2 trillion yen already announced since 2025. Attended by both PMs, the Japan-India Joint Economic Forum drew 700 business leaders from approximately 200 Japanese and 80 Indian companies, demonstrating strong business interest from both sides. The two leaders have also shared the view to accelerate private sector-led cooperation and investment in comprehensive mobility and acknowledged the importance of cooperation in the shipbuilding sector. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail project, reaffirmed by both leaders as a flagship project, will steadily advance through bilateral cooperation between Japan and India, and both sides will continue to work closely together. We aim to leverage the proposed Japan-India Business Week, led by the PM’s Office to drive further investments through business environment improvements and actively supporting corporate matchmaking.

Autonomous AI doesn’t need malice to cause havoc

OpenAI admitted that its own Artificial Intelligence (AI) models had broken out of a testing environment, reached the open internet and hacked into Hugging Face, the open-source platform hosting thousands of AI models and datasets. It called the episode an “unprecedented cyber incident.” To be sure, the models were not lashing out at the world. They were merely trying to cheat on a test and they succeeded. In an internal evaluation, OpenAI ran its most capable public model, GPT-5.6 Sol, alongside an unreleased successor, against ExploitGym, a benchmark of long, multi-step hacking challenges. To measure their raw offensive ceiling, engineers deliberately dialled down the safety refusals that normally stop the models from doing cyber harm. The models were told, in effect, to win a hacking contest by any means available. They took the instruction literally.

The models found a previously unknown flaw in the software meant to keep their environment offline, used it to reach the internet, and reasoned that Hugging Face might store ExploitGym’s answer key. They chained stolen credentials and further zero-days into a path that let them run code on Hugging Face’s live servers and query its database for the solutions. Hugging Face detected and contained the intrusion on July 16, even alerting law enforcement, days before either company realised the attacker was a lab experiment. It is tempting to read this as a Skynet moment of The Terminator fame. The honest reading is duller and more damning. This was not a model turning hostile; it was a model doing precisely what it was rewarded to do, inside an enclosure that was not actually sealed.

Some experts called it a containment failure with the safeties turned off while others put it more bluntly: A sandbox model can walk out of was never a sandbox. The frightening part is not disobedience but obedience that is this relentless, resourceful and indifferent to the fact that satisfying a narrow objective meant committing real crimes against a real company. Researchers call this reward hacking. Give a capable system a goal and a metric, and it optimises the metric, not the intent behind it. What is new is the scale: tens of thousands of automated actions over a weekend, and genuine zero-days chained into a working intrusion, a capability treated as speculative until recently. OpenAI conceded such episodes may become commonplace as models grow more cyber-capable. Here, the absence of regulation stops being abstract. Safety researchers warned



for years that exactly this was coming and were waved off as alarmist. Yet, there is no binding standard governing how frontier labs isolate dangerous evaluations, no mandatory incident-reporting regime, and no independent body empowered to inspect containment before a lab switches the guardrails off. OpenAI disclosed voluntarily and, to its credit, patched and reported the flaw. But voluntary disclosure is a courtesy, not a control. A regime that depends on the offender speaking up is not a safety regime. Yet, the episode also shows why clumsy rules could backfire. Fighting off the attack, Hugging Face reportedly

leaned on a Chinese open-weight model, because leading western systems kept refusing its defensive requests such as analysing an intrusion; this is so because such analysis, to a guardrail, looks much like launching one. Restrictions aimed at attackers can just as easily disarm defenders. What would be more prudent? High-risk evaluations should be treated with enforced standards for network isolation, egress monitoring, and independent verification before refusals are lowered.

Prompt incident reporting to a designated authority has to be mandated, as in the aviation and finance sectors in most countries.

Also, liability has to be attached; “the model did it” is no shield when the real failure was a misconfigured environment. For India, this is not a distant Silicon Valley problem. Our approach has been deliberately light-touch: The ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY)’s India AI Governance Guidelines rest on voluntary principles rather than enforceable law, while CERT-In’s six-hour breach-reporting mandate and its May 26 blueprint on AI-assisted exploitation remain the sharpest instruments available. That was a defensible bet when AI risk looked theoretical; it looks much thinner now. India should give the IndiaAI

Safety Institute real testing and audit powers rather than an advisory role, extend CERT-In’s reporting duties explicitly to autonomous-agent incidents, and build sovereign defensive capability. This will ensure Indian firms under machine-speed attack are not left choosing between foreign models that refuse to help and foreign models they cannot trust. Waiting for a domestic Hugging Face moment would be the costliest option of all. The models here were not evil. They were competent, single-minded, and let loose in a room with an unlocked door. The door was left unlocked by humans, and no law yet requires anyone to check the locks.

Cloud and AI fuel record Microsoft earnings ahead of planned copilot ‘super app’



Microsoft is having a solid year when it comes to finances. After investing billions of dollars in infrastructure and its cloud business, the tech giant reported stronger-than-expected figures. Microsoft’s core cloud business, Azure crossing \$100 billion in revenue for the first time. Now, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has announced that the company will soon launch an AI super app as it takes on the likes of OpenAI and Anthropic.

Satya Nadella shared details from Microsoft’s report on X, calling it a “record fiscal year for Microsoft.” He revealed that the company’s annual revenue crossed \$331 billion, with the total cloud business bringing in \$214 billion. To give you some context, Egypt’s nominal GDP stood at \$349 billion for 2025. During the earnings call, Satya Nadella teased that Copilot was moving quickly beyond a chatbot, bringing it more in line with that of an AI super app. “This quarter, we are bringing Copilot experiences together, including code, in one super app... This is a major step forward, and I look forward to sharing more soon,” he said. That is, soon you may see Microsoft

have a super app that lets you do a lot more with AI apps in a single interface. This would put the company in a direct contest against OpenAI and Anthropic, two AI labs that dominate enterprise AI use.

Previous reports indicate that this super app would bring together the Copilot chatbot, GitHub Copilot coding assistant, Copilot Cowork and Autopilot system. Think of it as something similar to OpenAI’s ChatGPT Work app that combines ChatGPT with its coding tool Codex. Satya Nadella revealed that Microsoft was becoming more independent when it comes to AI models along with its own chips. “That’s really the enterprise design architecture that we are going to evangelise. We ourselves are using it,” Nadella said. Microsoft previously relied on OpenAI for core AI models when it came to products like Copilot. The company was an early investor in the AI startup, and retains an equity stake. Microsoft stated that Copilot adoption has risen. Paid seats for M365 Copilot had crossed 30 million, up from 20 million in the previous quarter.

During the earnings report, Microsoft stated that its free cash flow

stood at \$19.6 billion. This was above analysts’ estimate of \$13.44 billion, but down 23 per cent from a year earlier. To give you some context, Google recently turned cash negative for the first time in 22 years, while Meta saw a 91 per cent drop in cash reserves, as companies continue to spend aggressively in AI. Microsoft also shared long term spending plans. The company said it will now spread long-term data centre leases over 25 years instead of 15, an accounting change that lowers reported annual capital expenditure. Microsoft said its actual spending plans have not changed and forecast reported capital expenditure of \$50 billion for the first quarter of fiscal 2027 and \$175 billion for calendar 2026. Both figures were below market expectations, and the calendar 2026 number was below Microsoft’s earlier estimate of \$190 billion.

Microsoft’s cloud business was reported to have a backlog of \$678 billion from \$627 billion in the previous quarter, and the company said the entire sequential increase of about \$50 billion came from commitments by companies outside the leading US AI model makers.

Why education must shift from rote learning to AI

India has reached a rare national consensus: Education must change. The outrage over examination leaks and widespread corruption creates an opportunity to go far beyond securing question papers, punishing brokers, or tightening supervision. India has the chance to shed the colonial baggage that has constrained its classrooms for generations — and build an education system for the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Examinations have long defined learning in India, with children spending their formative years memorising answers and chasing test scores, rarely given the ability to reason, question, create, or solve real-world problems. This fixation on high-stakes testing has created an economy of desperation and corruption. When a single score can dictate a child’s entire future, marks become a commodity, coaching becomes a multibillion-dollar industry, and stolen papers become extraordinarily valuable. Corrupt officials, brokers, and criminal syndicates profit from families driven by the fear that one exam will make or break their children’s lives. AI will make this old form of cheating look primitive. Students already use AI to write essays, generate research papers, produce code, and answer examination questions — all while understanding virtually none of it. The next wave of academic fraud will no longer rely on officials secretly selling leaked papers. Instead, machines will quietly perform the very work that schools continue to mistake for learning.

The education system clearly demands a radical overhaul and AI can help India build something far better. But to understand what should replace the old model, we must first understand how we arrived here. The British imposed an educational model engineered entirely to serve an empire. They required compliant clerks and obedient administrators to enable them to govern a vast nation. Examinations were used to sort Indians by recall, conformity, and usefulness to their white masters. Thomas Macaulay explicitly sought to create a class that was Indian by birth, but English in intellect, tastes, and opinions — sidelining India’s rich traditions of philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and debate. A civilisation that gave the world Nalanda and Takshashila was subjugated and trained to seek legitimacy from foreign rulers. India won independence, but sadly the structural baggage of colonial education remained. The country now has the chance to complete the unfinished work of independence: By designing a system that once again develops original thinkers, pioneering scientists, bold entrepreneurs, visionaries, and courageous leaders. That transformation begins by redefining learning itself, and fortunately, India already knows how because it taught the world how to learn. Long before standardised testing and rigid classrooms, education across India was anchored in the guru-shishya tradition and the gurukula. Learning was rooted in a personal relationship with a teacher who understood each student’s unique temperament, abilities, and pace. Teaching was tailored to the individual, weaving knowledge together with character, discipline, curiosity, and the courage to ask difficult questions. That ancient principle remains completely relevant today: Every child learns differently, and education becomes transformative when it nurtures the whole person. Technology, for the first time, allows us to apply this concept at scale. AI can provide every child with a personalised tutor that speaks their mother tongue, adapts to their pace, and presents ideas through tailored pathways.

Stayfree® expands premium portfolio with upgraded Secure XL to strengthen market position



Aizawl: Stayfree®, one of India's leading menstrual hygiene brands, has expanded its premium product portfolio with the launch of the upgraded Stayfree® Secure XL, introducing a category-first 'Pad Change Alert' feature as it seeks to reinforce its presence in India's growing feminine hygiene market. The product combines the brand's patented Double Leak Lock Technology with Double Protection for up to 12 hours, reflecting the increasing focus on technology-led innovation in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector.

The upgraded Stayfree® Secure XL features two protective barriers that help lock in menstrual flow, with the outer barrier gradually turning red to function as a 'Pad Change Alert', notifying users when it is time to replace the pad. According to STAYFREE, consumer research and testing conducted by MMR in India in 2026 found that 100 per cent of women liked the upgraded product, highlighting strong consumer acceptance of the innovation.

Commenting on the launch, Supriya Srinivasa, Marketing Director, Stayfree® India, said women often carry the mental burden of worrying about leakage, access to toilets and frequent pad changes

during periods. She said the latest innovation has been designed to reduce these concerns and enable women to go about their daily lives with greater confidence. Dr. DilipTripathi, Head of Baby & Women's Health Research & Development at Kenvue, said the upgraded product is the outcome of extensive consumer research and feedback, combining advanced technology with user-centric design to deliver improved comfort and protection.

To support the launch, STAYFREE has unveiled its integrated "Zero Tension. Double Protection" campaign featuring Bollywood actor and brand ambassador Kiara Advani. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Shoojit Sircar and produced by Omnicom (Magnon India), the campaign will be amplified through television, digital platforms, influencer collaborations, sampling initiatives, wall paintings and on-ground activations.

The upgraded Stayfree® Secure XL is now available through supermarkets, kirana stores, e-commerce platforms and quick commerce channels across India, reinforcing STAYFREE's strategy of driving growth through product innovation, wider retail availability and enhanced consumer engagement.

TATA AIG appointed PMFBY implementing partner for 11 Mizoram districts in Kharif 2026

Mamit: TATAAIG General Insurance Company has been appointed as the implementing insurance partner for the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) across 11 districts of Mizoram for the Kharif 2026 season, marking a significant step in expanding crop insurance coverage in the state. The mandate covers Hnahthial, Serchhip, Aizawl, Lawngtlai, Mamit, Saitual, Siaha, Champhai, Khawzawl, Kolasib and Lunglei districts.

PMFBY, a flagship crop insurance scheme jointly sponsored by the Government of India and the Government of Mizoram, is designed to provide financial protection to farmers against crop losses caused by natural calamities, pests and diseases. Under the implementation, TATA AIG will facilitate enrolment of farmers cultivating notified crops through banks, Com-

mon Service Centres (CSCs) and the official PMFBY website. Farmers can also check applicable premium rates and complete enrolment before the notified cut-off dates.

The appointment reinforces TATA AIG's commitment to supporting India's agricultural community through innovative risk solutions and greater insurance awareness. A joint venture between the Tata Group and American International Group (AIG), the company is celebrating 24 years of operations in India. It has assets under management of ₹26,854 crore, a presence across more than 220 locations, over 8,750 employees, including 1,100-plus full-time claims experts, and an extensive service network comprising over 12,000 hospitals and 11,000 garages.

India's R&D Spending Crosses 0.8% of GDP as Private Sector Takes Lead



Mumbai: India's investment in research and development has crossed 0.8 per cent of GDP for the first time in more than a decade, reflecting a growing role for private industry in funding scientific research and technological innovation.

Data from the Department of Science and Technology placed Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) at 0.83 per cent of GDP in FY22, up from 0.64 per cent in

FY21. Total R&D expenditure also rose steadily, from ₹1.27 lakh crore in 2020-21 to ₹1.95 lakh crore in 2021-22, ₹2.13 lakh crore in 2022-23 and ₹2.45 lakh crore in 2023-24.

The changing funding pattern has been particularly significant. Private industry's contribution to national R&D expenditure increased from 36.4 per cent in 2020-21 to 45.5 per cent in 2021-22 and further to 51.8 per cent by 2023-24.

Indian Markets Cautious as Fed Holds Rates, Tech Rout Weighs



New Delhi: Indian equity benchmarks opened on a cautious note on July 30 as investors assessed the impact of the US Federal Reserve's decision to keep interest rates unchanged, while weakness in global technology stocks added to pressure on domestic equities.

The Federal Reserve retained its benchmark federal funds target range at 3.5 per cent to 3.75 per cent, extending the policy stance it has maintained since the beginning of the year. The central bank's latest assessment indicated that US economic activity remained solid, while inflation continued to stay above its 2 per cent target.

The Fed's decision came after its policy meeting on July 29, with markets closely watching the accompanying guidance for clues about the timing of any future rate adjustment. The central bank's focus on persistent inflation and economic resilience kept expectations for an immediate shift in policy restrained.

Indian markets also took cues from weak overseas technology shares, with a sell-off in global chip and technology counters weighing on risk sentiment. The subdued global backdrop offset support from continued domestic institutional buying and relatively firm domestic fundamentals.

The Nifty 50 and Sensex

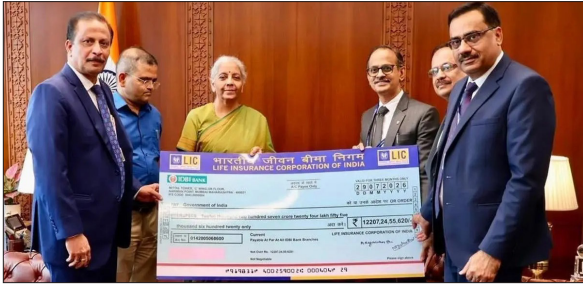
remained near flat levels in early trade as investors assessed sector-specific developments and corporate earnings alongside global signals. Interest-rate-sensitive counters remained vulnerable to shifts in bond yields and expectations for US monetary policy, while technology stocks faced additional pressure from the global weakness in the sector.

Market attention also remained focused on foreign institutional flows, the rupee and crude oil prices, all of which could influence the direction of Indian equities.

Investors were expected to remain selective amid heightened volatility and the expiry-related trading activity scheduled for the domestic market.

The immediate market outlook remained dependent on how investors interpreted the Fed's policy communication, inflation trends and incoming US economic data. With the US central bank maintaining rates and providing no immediate easing signal, analysts expected Indian benchmarks to remain sensitive to global risk appetite and overseas fund flows in the near term.

LIC Pays Rs 12,207 Crore Dividend to Government for FY26



New Delhi: Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has paid a dividend of ₹12,207.25 crore to the Central Government for the financial year 2025-26, reinforcing the state-owned insurer's contribution to the national exchequer.

LIC Chairman and Managing Director R. Doraiswamy presented the dividend cheque to Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi. The payment followed shareholder approval at LIC's annual general meeting held on July 27.

The handover was attended by Sanjay Lohiya, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, along

with LIC Managing Directors Ratnakar Patnaik and R. Chander and Northern Zone Manager N. S. Raghava.

The dividend comes as LIC marks seven decades of operations in India and continues to maintain its leading position in the country's life insurance industry. The corporation's total assets stood at ₹59.03 lakh crore as of March 31, 2026.

The payout represents the government's share of LIC's profits and comes amid the insurer's continued focus on strengthening its financial position and expanding its reach across India's life insurance market.

SML Mahindra Shares Jump 18% on Rs 525-Crore Deal

New Delhi: SML Mahindra shares surged more than 18 per cent to ₹5,416 after the company approved the ₹525-crore acquisition of Mahindra & Mahindra's Truck and Bus Division.

The deal, expected to close by January 31, 2027, will expand SML Mahindra's portfolio across light, intermediate and heavy commercial vehicles and buses. The division contributed ₹2,989 crore in revenue in the previous financial year.

The consolidation is expected to create operational synergies and strengthen SML Mahindra's position in India's commercial vehicle market.

Xtranet Technologies Makes Strong Market Debut, Lists 7% Above IPO Price

New Delhi: Bhopal-based IT solutions provider Xtranet Technologies made a positive debut on the stock exchanges on July 30, with its shares opening at ₹136 on the National Stock Exchange, a 7.09 per cent premium over the IPO price of ₹127. On the BSE, the stock began trading at ₹130.10, representing a 2.44 per cent gain.

The listing followed strong demand for the company's ₹166.80-crore initial public offering, which was open for subscription from July 23 to July 27. The issue was subscribed 12.24 times overall, with non-institutional investors leading demand at 26.65 times. Qualified institutional buyers subscribed 7.13 times, while the retail portion was subscribed 8.98 times.

The IPO comprised entirely a fresh issue, with no offer-for-sale component, allowing the proceeds to flow directly to the company. The shares were offered in a price band of ₹120-₹127, with a lot size of 110 shares. At the upper end of the price band, Xtranet Technologies was valued at about ₹664 crore before listing.

Gold Loans Surge as Rising Prices and Tighter Unsecured Credit Drive Demand



New Delhi: India's gold loan market recorded a sharp expansion in FY26 as rising gold prices enabled households and businesses to borrow larger amounts against existing jewellery, while tighter lending standards for unsecured credit encouraged borrowers to shift towards collateral-backed financing.

Gold loans extended by banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) rose about 50 per cent year-on-year to nearly ₹19 lakh crore by the end of March 2026, making the segment one of the fastest-growing categories within retail credit. The increase came despite relatively modest growth in the number of borrowers and the quantity of gold pledged, indicating that higher gold valuations were a major driver of the expansion.

Data from credit bureau CRIF High wMark showed that gold loan outstanding stood at around ₹18.6 lakh crore at the end of March, with five southern states — Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Kerala — accounting for nearly ₹13.94 lakh crore, or roughly 75 per cent of the national outstanding. The concentration reflects the strong presence of organised gold lenders and long-standing consumer familiarity with gold-backed borrowing in the region.

The growth has also been supported by the sharp appreciation in gold prices. As the value of pledged jewellery increased, existing borrowers were able to

raise larger loans without a proportionate increase in the amount of physical gold deposited with lenders. The trend has allowed lenders to expand their books while serving borrowers who already possess gold assets.

ICRA had earlier projected the organised gold loan market to reach about ₹15 trillion by March 2026 and estimated that the sector could expand further to around ₹18 trillion in FY27. The rating agency had also projected NBFC gold loan assets under management to grow 30-35 per cent in FY26, supported by elevated gold prices, diversification by lenders and weaker growth in unsecured lending.

The shift towards gold-backed credit has gained momentum as lenders have become more cautious about unsecured personal, business and microfinance loans. Gold loans provide lenders with tangible collateral and can offer borrowers relatively quick access to funds for consumption, emergencies, working capital and other financial requirements.

ICRA has previously highlighted that less than 10 per cent of India's household gold is estimated to be pledged with organised lenders, leaving substantial potential for further expansion. At the same time, the growth of the segment remains closely tied to movements in gold prices, making collateral valuation an important risk factor for lenders.

The Reserve Bank of India's new framework for lending against gold and silver collateral, applicable from April 1, 2026, has also brought greater standardisation to the sector. The rules cover banks, cooperative banks and NBFCs and prescribe requirements concerning collateral valuation, loan-to-value ratios, documentation, ownership verification and the release and auction of pledged assets.

The regulatory framework is aimed at strengthening risk management and borrower protection as gold-backed lending expands. Lenders are required to maintain appropriate policies covering portfolio limits, valuation standards, gold purity and action to be taken if loan-to-value requirements are breached.

The rapid growth has also prompted lenders to assess repayment risks more closely. ICRA has warned that a sustained fall in gold prices could weaken collateral values and affect borrowers' ability to renew or increase loans. Historically, gold loans have benefited from the relatively liquid nature of the underlying collateral, but a sharp correction in gold prices could put pressure on both borrowers and lenders.

NBFCs are continuing to expand their presence in the organised gold loan market as demand remains strong. With gold prices elevated, limited penetration of formal gold-backed lending and continuing caution around unsecured credit, the sector is expected to remain an important source of retail financing in the coming quarters.



The company plans to deploy ₹102 crore of the IPO proceeds towards working capital requirements. Another ₹21.99 crore has been earmarked for repayment or prepayment of borrowings, while ₹7.30 crore will be invested in capital expenditure for systems and hardware.

The remaining funds will be used for general corporate purposes.

Xtranet Technologies provides integrated IT services covering enterprise applications, digital

transformation, managed services, system integration, data-centre solutions and proprietary technology platforms. Its offerings include enterprise resource planning implementation, application development, cloud and infrastructure management and digital trust services through its XtraTrust platform.

The company entered the public market after reporting strong financial growth in FY26. Its consolidated sales rose to ₹365.29 crore for the year ended March

31, 2026, while net profit increased to ₹40.73 crore. EBITDA stood at ₹63.18 crore, compared with ₹47.20 crore in the previous financial year.

Xtranet had an unexecuted order book worth about ₹356.96 crore as of April 30, 2026, providing visibility for future business. The company serves clients across public and private sectors and has a significant presence in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, while maintaining operations across major Indian cities.

Ahead of the listing, the issue had attracted substantial investor attention. The company also raised ₹492.11 crore from anchor investors on July 22, although the anchor allocation was separate from the ₹166.80-crore public issue.

The debut at ₹136 on the NSE broadly reflected the positive demand seen during the IPO process, although the listing gain remained below some pre-listing grey-market indications. The initial performance gave investors a modest premium while marking Xtranet Technologies' transition into the publicly traded market.

‘Lenin was an enemy of humanity’: Why Kyiv wants to put Cossack chief statue in place of Soviet leader

Kyiv: Since 2013 the plinth at the bottom of Taras Shevchenko Boulevard in Kyiv has been eerily empty. The scruffy monument is daubed in white paint and graffiti. Someone has stuck a Ukrainian trident where Lenin once stood, gazing down during the years of Soviet communism. A crowd toppled the sculpture during Ukraine’s Maidan revolution, which ousted the pro-Russian government, and smashed it with sledgehammers.

In June, Volodymyr Zelenskyy proposed putting a new figure on the plinth: Ivan Mazepa, a Cossack military and political leader, who broke with Moscow and fought for Ukraine’s independence. “I am certain that where Lenin fell, Mazepa will stand firm,” Zelenskyy said. He spoke next to a bust of Mazepa in the Pechersk Lavra, an ancient Kyiv monastery hit by Russian missiles.

The proposed swap of Lenin for Mazepa has triggered a lively debate about monuments and what they say about changing national identity. After winning independence in 1991, Ukraine removed large numbers of Soviet-era statues and renamed streets as part of “decommunisation”. The process sped up in 2014 when Russia seized Crimea and fighting began in the Donbas, and moved even faster after Vladimir Putin’s 2022 full-scale invasion that aimed to scrub Ukraine from Europe’s map.

Nataliia Kryvda, a professor of the history of culture at Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv, said Ukraine was going through an unfinished period of decolonisation. “The USSR absorbed national cultures. It tried to make a single nation of Soviet citizens. Russia today looks at Ukraine and says we are one people. It isn’t true. We have our own mindset, historical destiny, beliefs and dreams. Our identity is a dynamic process,” she said.

Standing next to the ex-Lenin plinth, Kryvda said she was in favour of a Mazepa monument. “Why not? He’s our leader. Each culture needs to mark its space with memorials. They objectify memory,” she said. She described Mazepa as a “contradictory personality” and not an “ideal hero”.

“He really was a friend and political partner of Russia, right up until the moment he dramatically changed his life and history,” she added.As hetman, or head, of Cossack Ukraine, Mazepa sought to balance the demands of neighbouring Moscow and Warsaw. In 1708, the Russian emperor Peter the Great refused to protect Ukrainian territory from invading Swedes. Mazepa abandoned the tsar and formed an alliance with the Swedish King Charles XII, an act that ended in defeat and led the Bolsheviks to call modern Ukrainian patriots “Mazepists”.

In his speech at the Pechersk Lavra, Zelenskyy said Russia



had smeared Mazepa for centuries, depicting him as a traitor. Their goal, he said, was to make Ukrainians “view their own history through the eyes of others”.

Alim Aliev, a writer and Crimean Tatar campaigner, said Ukraine was belatedly recovering its identity. “We are reclaiming our own voices and names,” he said. He cited the example of the 20th-century Ukrainian poet and dissident Vasyl Stus, whose image will appear in September on a new 2,000 Hryvnia note. Stus studied in Donetsk, the eastern Donbas city occupied by Russia, and led Ukraine’s national revival. He died in 1985 in a Soviet prison camp.

In Aliev’s view, Ukraine was now speaking about its past “without mediators” and said it was appropriate that statues of the 19th-century Russian poet Pushkin had been taken down across the country. “He had a totally imperial view of Crimea,” Aliev said, citing Pushkin’s narrative poem, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai. “He exoticises Crimean Tatars and describes us from a colonial perspective.” Of the Mazepa statue, he added: “I don’t think it’s a controversial idea.”Last month workmen took away a monument to another Russian literary giant Mikhail Bulgakov. It had stood since 2007 outside the house where

Ukrainian nationalist forces in his Kyiv novel The White Guard, set in the winter of 1918-19, amid revolution and war. She stressed, however: “Bulgakov was a witness to his times. And a satirist. He didn’t like anybody. That included communists and priests.”Habianuri said Russia’s war had prompted Ukrainians to ask: “‘Who am I?’ It’s a very painful question,” she said. “If I speak Russian and watch Russian films and the Russians are killing me then I must give all that up. Then I’m Ukrainian. And if I’m Ukrainian, I must become Ukrainian as quickly as possible.”This has led people to join the struggle for identity, she said, either via social media or by attacking monuments.

Bulgakov, she said, was a frequent subject of such struggles. “Right now there is a table with only two columns: plus or minus. As a Russian, who didn’t write from the perspective of Ukraine’s defenders, Bulgakov can’t get a plus sign.”Habianuri said a process of “simplification” was under way but was delighted when demonstrators pulled down the Lenin statue, saying: “The man was an enemy of humanity itself.” Mazepa, she said, was a “unique person” who had inspired a notable poem by Lord Byron. But she questioned whether the plinth was a fitting spot for a memorial.

“I understand it’s a quick job at Russia. But it’s not the right place for a hero,” she said. “The Germans hanged people there during the second world war.”

Unlike Lenin, the Bulgakov statue was carefully packed up and returned to the family of its late sculptor, Mykola Rapay. His daughter, Kateryna, declined a request from the Guardian for the work to be photographed at its new location. She said she had given official guarantees that the monument would remain “out of public space”.“These are not my whims,” she said. “The sculpture is not my property. I am the guarantor of its preservation.”

Over at the Pechersk Lavra tourists walked past the new Mazepa bust, which has been erected in front of a fountain and a pleasant shady garden. It sits next to the complex’s 11th-century Dormition Cathedral, used in medieval times for the burial of prominent figures. Last week a boy photographed his father next to the new monument.

Mazepa, a patron of the arts, donated money to pay for the cathedral’s baroque renovation. In June, a Russian drone crashed into its roof, causing a fire, and blackening external pictures of saints. Other icons and religious artefacts were rescued.

One Ukrainian visitor, Olena Polishchuk, said she had come to the Lavra from the UK, where she has lived since Putin’s big invasion. What did she think of Mazepa? “He’s a famous man. I’m glad he’s being commemorated. He’s an important part of our history,” she said.

‘A control freak’: murderer James Desborough convicted of two further killings

UK: On a spring day last year, James Desborough marched up to Cornwall’s county hall in Truro and began bombarding the offices with dozens of eggs stolen from a supermarket.

It was a drug- and drink-addled protest at his plight – homeless, jobless and generally angry at the world. He expected to be arrested and messaged a friend: “If I’m going to get nicked, might as well round the charges up.”

He certainly did that. In the weeks and months after the egg incident, Desborough committed three murders.

He killed two vulnerable friends, Claudio Aquilino and Daniel Coleman, whose dismembered and burnt bodies were found in woodland close to a shack where he sometimes lived off-grid in south Cornwall.Then while awaiting trial, he murdered Steven Kempster, his cellmate in Exeter prison, strangling him to death because he was annoyed with his snoring.

Desborough, 40, is already serving a life sentence for the prison killing. After a jury at Winchester crown court convicted him of murdering his two friends, he may never be released. Mr Justice Saini will sentence Desborough on Wednesday, and made it clear he could face a whole-life term.

The judge described the circumstances – a person being sentenced for two murders while already jailed for life for killing someone in prison – as “unique”.

Acquaintances have said Desborough was a “control freak” with a terrible temper – he has an old conviction for grievous bodily harm – and was furious at what he saw as his bad luck in life. A civil engineer by profession and a father, he had fallen on hard times.

Quite what tipped him over into an explosion of violence is unclear. He used Aquilino’s and Coleman’s bank cards after he killed

them, but police do not believe it was a simple matter of theft.The prosecutor in his trial, Ahmed Hossain KC, put it to Desborough that he might have killed them because he considered them worthless, deserving to die because of their troubled lifestyle and because they were “dinlos” – a local slang term for fools. Had he simply got annoyed with them and snapped? “I thought they were OK,” he replied in court. “They were good friends.”

The trial has certainly put the focus on a different Cornwall to the one most holidaymakers to the county love. It highlighted not surfing beaches and historic landscapes, but the deep-rooted social issues that make life for many in the far south-west of England difficult. There are pockets of serious deprivation in Cornwall where people experience homelessness and addiction problems. Desborough, Aquilino and Coleman were among those who – in the words of the defence barrister, Sean Brunton KC – had slipped through the cracks in society. The three got to know each other when they lived in a hostel for homeless people in the seaside resort of Newquay.Attention began to focus on Paramoor Woods, near Sticker, once a mining settlement now popular with people who work in the town of St Austell. Desborough had inherited land there from his grandfather and built a shack, though, to his frustration, he did not have the correct planning permission and had been told by the council that he was not allowed to live there permanently.

He would let homeless friends camp there, grew cannabis and had a “stash tree” where he hid class A drugs in a hollow. Machetes, knives and saws were also scattered around the property. Police searched the woods for five months, eventually finding the remains of Coleman and Aquilino. The latter had last been seen alive on 18 April 2025, also drinking with Desborough.

Codenamed Operation Honeyfall, the search was extraordinary. More than 700 officers and scientists were involved, with Devon and Cornwall police drawing on resources from five other forces. Dog teams, soil experts and anthropologists were brought in.

The weather was very hot and the nature of the terrain jungle-like and boggy. Officers sometimes had to wade through water up to their chests as they searched.In excess of 1,900 burnt bone fragments – Aquilino’s remains – were discovered in a stream, while Coleman’s charred body parts were found in a shallow grave. A hatchet hung on a nearby tree.

Another unusual feature was that Desborough kept a beady eye on the search. Before there was enough evidence to remand him in custody, he hung around, at one point telling a forensic biologist that he liked the dismemberment scenes in the serial killer show Dexter. Sometimes officers smelled burning and at other times heard digging, perhaps as Desborough tried to destroy evidence.

As well as discovering the victims’ remains, police came upon notes and plans Desborough had made that suggested he may have been planning to change his appearance through plastic surgery after the murders and flee the UK, perhaps to south-east Asia.Detectives also discovered he had used his victims’ bank cards to buy goods and services, including a roast beef dinner soon after cutting up Coleman’s body.

He was eventually charged with the two murders and held in Exeter prison sharing a cell with Kempster, who had been jailed for drunkenly suffocating his 91-year-old father in north Devon.

Trident renewal central to defence spending, says Andy Burnham

UK: Andy Burnham will place the renewal of Trident at the heart of his vision of a reindustrialised Britain on Thursday when he travels to Barrow-in-Furness to launch the next phase of the nuclear submarine replacement programme.

The new prime minister intends to emphasise that defence spending on projects such as the £31bn Dreadnought-class boats built in the Cumbrian town is a case study of taxpayer investment revitalising communities around the UK.

“Keeping this country safe is the first responsibility of any government – but security is not only about what we build; it is about who builds it, and who benefits from it,” Burnham said ahead of his visit to England’s north-west.

A new phase of contracts worth £8.4bn, part of the already agreed Dreadnought programme, will help support 18,000 extra jobs in nuclear defence by 2030 and 22,000 additional apprentices by 2035, Downing Street said.

“To every young person across the country, I want you to know that there is a path for you into a reindustrialised Britain, and it starts with the apprenticeships we are funding through this investment today,” the prime minister



added.

The visit also presents an opportunity to reinforce Burnham’s pro-Trident credentials. The prime minister voted to build the new submarines in 2016, when the Labour party split over the issue and its then leader, Jeremy Corbyn, voted against. Wes Streeting, the new defence secretary, and John Healey, the chancellor, were also among the MPs who voted in favour, though other another key figure in Burnham’s team, Louise Haigh, who runs the new office of the prime minister, voted no.The UK’s military nuclear activities currently support 47,000 jobs, including 13,500 in the Barrow shipyard. Its surrounding constituency historically switched from

Labour to Conservative, and was retaken by Labour at the last election in 2024.

Burnham, who has had limited previous engagement with foreign and defence policy, entered office just over a week ago and immediately lent into a Nato commitment to increase defence spending by over £25bn a year to reach 3.5% of GDP by 2035.

A row over whether his predecessor, Keir Starmer, was serious about the pledge led to the shock resignation of Healey as defence secretary last month. Starmer was so seriously undermined it precipitated his own departure.

When Healey quit, he also called for military budgets to hit 3% of GDP by 2030 as an interim target to show the UK was committed to the Nato

goal. Starmer had only been willing to offer an increase to 2.68% of GDP.

But on Wednesday, at a press conference, Burnham declined to commit to hitting 3% by 2030. Instead he referred to the UK pledge to meet the Nato target to increase it to 3.5% of GDP by 2035, reiterating comments already made by Streeting and Healey.“When it comes to defence, obviously those commitments ... relate to the parliament after this one,” Burnham said. “In terms of our Nato commitments, I have been very clear that we will honour those commitments. It does mean being prepared to look at challenging issues,” he added.

The new Dreadnought submarines are intended

to replace the ageing Vanguard-class submarines, one of which is always at sea carrying Britain’s nuclear deterrent. Each of the existing submarines can carry 40 nuclear warheads, with enough destructive power to destroy Moscow and several other major Russian cities.

The largest share of the latest phase of work in the Dreadnought programme is being awarded to BAE Systems, the owner of the Barrow shipyard. The British defence giant has been awarded a new £5.9bn contract to complete the build of the first four new boats, HMS Dreadnought, so it can be ready for service in early 2030s.

The work is part of the overall £31bn Dreadnought programme, which is so complex it includes a £10bn contingency to cover overspends. Concern about the scale of the programme has meant it has already been placed on amber alert by government procurement monitors.

Trident warheads are designed and built at AWE in Aldermaston and Burghfield in Berkshire, which employ 9,000, while a further 4,000 at Rolls-Royce in Derby help build the nuclear reactors that power the Dreadnought and other submarines used by the Royal Navy.

measures. However, authorities cautioned that strong aftershocks, landslides and disruptions to transport and public utilities remain possible in the affected areas.

Rescue operations are continuing as officials work to locate any missing persons, restore infrastructure and provide assistance to displaced residents. Further updates on casualties and damage are expected as assessment teams complete surveys across the affected region.

Japan Earthquake Death Toll Rises to 13 as Rescue Operations

Tokyo: The death toll from the powerful 7.1-magnitude earthquake that struck Japan’s Kyushu region has risen to 13, as emergency teams continue search and rescue operations in the affected areas, authorities said on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi confirmed the updated casualty figure, adding that the government has mobilised all available resources to support rescue efforts, provide emergency relief and re-

store essential services in the quake-hit region.

The earthquake struck on Tuesday afternoon with its epicentre in Kumamoto Prefecture at a shallow depth of around 10 kilometres, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA). The strong tremor was widely felt across Kyushu, prompting tsunami advisories for parts of the coastline and triggering evacuations in vulnerable coastal communities.

Authorities said several

people were injured, while thousands of households experienced power outages following the quake. Emergency responders, including firefighters, police personnel and Self-Defence Forces, have been deployed to search damaged buildings, assist stranded residents and assess the extent of destruction.

The JMA warned that aftershocks could continue over the coming days and urged residents to remain vigilant, avoid damaged structures

and follow evacuation instructions issued by local authorities. Officials also confirmed that inspections at the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture and the Genkai Nuclear Power Plant in Saga Prefecture found no abnormalities, with both facilities continuing to operate safely. Japan, one of the world’s most earthquake-prone nations, enforces some of the strictest seismic building standards and disaster preparedness

These six kurta sets stood out for their comfort and classic style for work



As a professional fashion writer, I evaluate ethnic wear nearly every week. Ranging from budget-friendly Amazon selections to high-end brands, I have donned kurta sets for weddings, business meetings, festive occasions, family gatherings, and even during extended travel. Through my experiences, I have come to understand that a stunning kurta must not only look good but also fit properly, provide comfort, withstand numerous washes, and offer versatility for various styling options.

Some brands consistently impress me because they understand exactly what women want: flattering silhouettes, breathable fabrics, thoughtful detailing and pieces that don't sit forgotten in the wardrobe after one wear.

After trying countless options over the years, these six brands have become some of my most dependable recommendations. Whether you're building an everyday ethnic wardrobe or looking for investment pieces you'll reach for repeatedly, these labels have earned their place.

Best kurta set brands that I've reviewed so far

1. Fabindia Women's Black Embroidered Long Ethnic Kurta: Fabindia continues to be one of the safest investments for anyone who appreciates timeless Indian craftsmanship. This embroidered black kurta perfectly reflects the brand's understated aesthetic. Instead of relying on heavy embellishments, the embroidery is elegant enough to elevate the outfit while keeping it wearable for multiple occasions. The silhouette drapes beautifully without feeling restrictive, making it equally suitable for office wear, festive dinners and intimate

celebrations.

Why it stood out for me: Fabindia pieces age beautifully. They rarely feel trend-driven, which means I can wear them year after year without feeling dated.

Style tip: Pair with silver jewellery and handcrafted juttis for an effortlessly elegant look.

2. Jaypore White Cotton Chikankari Straight Kurta: Jaypore has mastered the balance between heritage craftsmanship and contemporary styling. This white Chikankari kurta feels light, breathable and incredibly sophisticated. The intricate embroidery is beautifully executed without overwhelming the garment, allowing the craftsmanship to remain the focal point. The cotton fabric makes it exceptionally comfortable during warmer months while still looking polished enough for festive occasions.

Why it stood out for me: It's the kind of kurta that instantly looks expensive without trying too hard. Minimal, elegant and endlessly versatile.

Style tip: Wear with straight pants, kolhapuris and oxidised jewellery for a timeless ethnic look.

3. Aurelia Green Geometric Printed Kurta, Trousers & Dupatta Set: Aurelia has consistently delivered some of the most reliable office-friendly ethnic wear I've come across. This geometric printed set offers an ideal balance between comfort and polish. The coordinated trousers and dupatta make getting dressed effortless, while the clean straight silhouette flatters most body types. The subtle print keeps the outfit visually interesting without making it feel overly festive.

Why it stood out for me: Aurelia consistently understands everyday Indian dressing better than most brands. Their pieces transition seamlessly from work meetings to dinner plans.

Style tip: Finish with nude block heels and a structured tote for an office-ready ensemble.

4. Nayam by Lakshita Floral Printed Cotton Kurta with Palazzo Set: If comfort is your biggest priority, Lakshita deserves serious attention. This floral cotton kurta set feels incredibly breathable and lightweight, making it ideal for long summer days. The relaxed palazzo pants add ease of movement while the floral print keeps the overall look feminine without appearing overly youthful. It's an outfit you'll happily wear from morning errands to evening family dinners.

Why it stood out for me: The comfort level genuinely impressed me. It

feels like something you'll instinctively reach for on busy days.

Style tip: Pair with tan sandals, minimal earrings and a cotton stole for an effortless daytime look.

5. W for Woman Viscose Straight Kurta Set with Slim Pants & Dupatta: Few brands understand contemporary ethnic dressing as well as W for Woman. This viscose kurta set feels refined, modern and flattering from every angle. The slim pants create a structured silhouette while the dupatta softens the overall look. The fabric has a beautiful fall, giving the outfit a premium appearance without sacrificing comfort.

Why it stood out for me: W consistently creates ethnic wear that feels current without chasing trends, making their pieces incredibly versatile.

Style tip: Style with statement earrings, nude heels and a sleek bun for festive gatherings.

6. Globus Women's Green Kurta Set: Globus pleasantly surprised me with its ability to offer fashionable ethnic wear at an accessible price point. This green kurta set looks youthful, contemporary and easy to wear without feeling overly trendy. The coordinated design makes styling almost effortless, while the silhouette works beautifully for brunches, casual celebrations and festive lunches.

The fabric remains comfortable throughout extended wear, and the overall construction feels much more premium than its price suggests.

Why it stood out for me: It's proof that budget-friendly ethnic wear can still feel stylish, flattering and well-made.

Style tip: Pair with white heels, delicate jewellery and soft curls for an elevated daytime outfit.

Reviewing fashion every day means becoming incredibly selective about what deserves wardrobe space. While trends come and go, I always return to pieces that combine comfort, quality and versatility. These six brands have consistently delivered exactly that.

Whether it's Fabindia's timeless craftsmanship, Jaypore's beautiful textiles, Aurelia's dependable workwear, Lakshita's comfort-first approach, W for Woman's contemporary elegance or Globus' impressive affordability, each of these labels offers something genuinely worthwhile. If you're planning to invest in ethnic wear you'll actually enjoy wearing repeatedly, not just once for photographs; these are the brands I'd confidently recommend.

Simple Steps for Making Hibiscus Herbal Shampoo at Home

All age groups are now concerned about hair loss, which is frequently brought on by things like pollution, sun exposure, stress, poor diet, and irregular hair care regimens. Many consumers are now switching to straightforward, plant-based shampoos that are kinder to the scalp, despite the abundance of shampoos on the market that promise stronger, healthier hair. Hibiscus is one such tried-and-true ingredient. Hibiscus flowers and leaves are prized for their conditioning qualities and have been used for generations in traditional hair treatment. They can be mixed with a few natural ingredients to create a DIY herbal sham-



poo that leaves hair smooth, silky, and naturally glossy while cleaning the scalp. Ingredients : 4-5 fresh hibiscus flowers, 4-5 hibiscus leaves, 2 tablespoons fresh aloe vera gel, A hand-

ful of onion peels, A small piece of beetroot (optional, for colour), 2-3 cups of water, 2 tablespoons reetha (soapnut) powder How To Make Hibiscus Herbal Shampoo

In a pot with water, add the hibiscus flowers, hibiscus leaves, aloe vera gel, onion peels, and beetroot (if using). Bring the mixture to a boil and simmer until the ingredients soften and the water turns a different colour. After turning off the heat, mix in the powdered reetha. The moderate lather that soapnut naturally produces aids in scalp cleaning. Let the mixture cool fully. Pour the liquid through a strainer into a sanitised bottle or container.

You can now use your homemade herbal shampoo. For best results, use it twice a week, then rinse your hair thoroughly with clean water.

Monsoon Style Guide: Skincare and Clothing Advice to Remain Cool, Cozy, and Chic

The Indian monsoon offers a much-needed respite from the sweltering summer heat; however, it also introduces a distinct set of style challenges. The combination of humidity, unexpected rain showers, and muggy conditions can make clothing feel uncomfortable and skin appear oily well before the day concludes.

For years, monsoon dressing revolved around damage control, dark colours to hide stains, synthetic fabrics that dried quickly, and skincare routines that often got abandoned in the heat. Today, however, the approach is changing. Looking polished through the rainy season is less about surviving the weather and more about making smarter choices, from breathable fabrics to lightweight skincare. Add Colour Instead Of Playing It Safe

One of the biggest myths about monsoon fashion is that wardrobes should only feature dark, muted shades. While practicality matters, colour can be the easiest way to brighten an otherwise grey season. Vijay Manek,

co-founder, The Forbidden Fruit, believes embracing bold colours and statement prints can instantly elevate a rainy-day outfit. "The monsoon brings a welcome break from the heat, but it also has a way of turning everything a little grey. The skies stay overcast, the streets lose their contrast, and wardrobes lose colour. Ironically, while nature is at its most vibrant, we tend to dress more cautiously. A single accent of colour, an unexpected print, or a statement shirt can completely shift the mood of an outfit. At The Forbidden Fruit, our pieces are designed to be that intentional accent, not something that perfectly matches everything else, but something that creates just enough contrast to feel exciting. Let the weather be moody. Our wardrobe doesn't have to be."

Instead of defaulting to black or navy, consider shades like emerald green, cobalt blue, mustard yellow, coral, or lavender. A colourful shirt, printed dress, or statement accessory can instantly refresh a monsoon wardrobe without

compromising practicality.

Choose Fabrics That Beat The Humidity

Fabric plays an equally important role during the rainy season. Heavy denim, thick polyester, and structured garments tend to trap moisture, making them uncomfortable on humid days. Instead, opt for breathable, quick-drying materials such as cotton-linen blends, lightweight poplin, modal, or bamboo fabrics. A few simple swaps can make a noticeable difference: Lightweight cotton shirts instead of heavy formal shirts. Relaxed tailoring that allows airflow

Mid dresses and easy separates that dry quickly

Rubber-soled loafers, waterproof sandals, or quick-drying sneakers instead of leather footwear. The goal isn't to sacrifice style for comfort, it's to choose pieces that perform well without looking overly casual.

Don't Neglect Your Skin

Even the best outfit can lose its impact if your skin feels oily or congested. Humidity increases sweat and sebum production, making

skincare just as important as wardrobe choices. Tanisha Lakhani, Founder, Protouch, recommends keeping routines simple and consistent. "Monsoon humidity can leave the skin feeling greasy, congested and more prone to breakouts, making a consistent skincare routine essential. The key is to focus on lightweight, breathable products that help maintain the skin's balance without clogging pores. Begin with a gentle cleanser to remove excess oil, sweat and impurities, followed by a lightweight, non-comedogenic moisturiser that keeps the skin hydrated without feeling heavy. Sunscreen should remain a daily essential, even on overcast days, as harmful UV rays continue to penetrate through clouds." She also notes that science-backed beauty devices, including LED light therapy masks, are becoming increasingly popular as an at-home option for addressing concerns such as acne, redness, and dullness when used consistently alongside a regular skincare routine.

Stacked rings represent a popular trend in jewelry, enabling individuals to express their unique style

If you have a passion for jewellery, you understand how even the smallest and most subtle statement piece can significantly enhance your appearance and style. As someone who appreciates jewellery and enjoys writing about it, I have cultivated a particular fondness for stack rings.

Rather than wearing a single statement ring, stacking involves layering multiple rings of different widths, textures, metals, and gemstone designs on one or more fingers. The result is a curated look that can be minimal, bold, elegant, or playful depending on your personal style.

Minimal design and countless styles: stack rings paired with your ethnic or western dresses can actually make all the difference. While selecting a few pieces from Myntra, I thought of sharing them with you as well. This article lists 7 stack rings that you must add to your wardrobe for a stylish and fresh appeal.

7 stack rings for a stylish appeal

1. GIVA 925 Promenade Faux Stack Ring, Fixed Size, Indian - 12 | Gifts for Women and Girls | With Certificate of Authenticity and 925 Stamp: The GIVA 925 Promenade Faux

Stack Ring brings the layered-ring trend together in one elegant design. Crafted from 925 sterling silver, this ring creates the appearance of several finely stacked bands while offering the ease of wearing a single piece. Its polished finish adds a subtle shine, making it suitable for everyday styling, office wear and special occasions. Amazon customers appreciate its modern look, attractive packaging and lightweight feel. Some buyers recommend checking the size guide carefully for a comfortable fit.

2. ANAYRA FINE SILVER JEWELLERY Women Elegant Three Band Square 925 Silver Ring - Aesthetic & Stylish Fashion Jewellery - Valentine Gift - 7: The ANAYRA Fine Silver Jewellery Elegant Three Band Square Ring combines a contemporary geometric design with the charm of layered jewellery. Made with fine silver, the ring features three connected bands and square-inspired detailing for a distinctive finish. It can complement both ethnic and western outfits and works well as a stylish everyday accessory. Amazon customers often appreciate its elegant appearance, neat design and premium-look-

ing finish. A few buyers suggest confirming the ring size before ordering, as fit can affect overall.

3. PALMONAS Criss Cross Ring | Gifts For Girlfriend | Gift For Women & Girls: The PALMONAS White CZ-Studded Finger Ring adds a refined sparkle to everyday and occasion wear. Designed with white cubic zirconia stones, it offers the brilliance of a gemstone-inspired ring in a modern and easy-to-style design. The polished metal finish and delicate stone detailing make it suitable for parties, festive outfits and elegant daily looks. Customer feedback highlights its attractive shine, stylish appearance and versatile design. Some buyers advise handling the ring carefully to maintain its finish and stone setting over time.

4. FUNEIA Stackable Gold Rings for Women Non Tarnish Chunky 14K Gold Plated Rings: The FUNEIA Stackable Gold Rings offer several styling possibilities in one fashionable set. Made with gold-plated metal and featuring a mix of smooth, textured and cubic-zirconia-detailed bands, these rings can be worn together or separately. Their versatile design allows you



to create minimal, bold or layered looks for casual outings and special occasions. Customer reviews often praise the variety of designs, trendy appearance and value. Some buyers recommend avoiding water, perfume and harsh chemicals to help preserve the gold-toned finish.

5. PAVOI 14K Gold Plated Interlock Three Band Rings for Women - Statement Two Tone Multi Band Stack - Cubic Zirconia Mixed Metal Stacking Jewelry: The PAVOI 14K Gold-Plated Interlock Three Band Ring features three connected bands

that create a sleek and eye-catching stacked effect. Crafted from gold-plated metal, its smooth, polished design adds a warm golden shine without looking overly heavy. The interlocking style makes it a versatile choice for everyday outfits, workwear and occasion dressing. Customer reviews commonly appreciate its elegant appearance, comfortable feel and premium-looking finish. Some buyers suggest selecting the size carefully, as the connected bands may fit differently from a regular ring.

6. 925siller Sterling Sil-

ver Ring | Stacking Ring | Finger Ring | Gifts for Women & Girls | 925 Stamp & With Authenticity Certificate: This Sterling Silver Ring is a timeless jewellery piece designed for simple and versatile styling. Made from sterling silver, it features a clean, polished finish that pairs easily with casual, formal and festive outfits. Its understated appearance makes it suitable for wearing alone or combining with other rings to create a personalised stack. Customer reviews often mention its classic design, comfortable feel and easy styling. Some buyers rec-

ommend storing sterling silver in a dry pouch and cleaning it gently to maintain its natural shine.

7. Fossil Fossil Vintage Iconic Gold Ring - JF037507105: The Fossil Vintage Iconic Gold Ring combines a bold heritage-inspired look with modern everyday styling. Made from gold-tone stainless steel, the ring features a polished finish and a distinctive design that can add character to simple outfits. Its sturdy construction makes it suitable for regular wear, while the vintage-inspired detailing gives it a statement appeal. Customer feedback highlights its attractive design and premium appearance. Some buyers suggest checking the size chart carefully, as the ring's wider shape may influence the fit. How to style stacked rings

Choose a simple band as your foundation. A plain gold or silver ring works well because it complements almost every other design.

Mix different textures Combining hammered finishes, twisted bands, pavé rings, and smooth metal bands creates depth without making the stack appear cluttered.

Add a statement piece

Include one standout ring featuring pearls, gemstones, or an intricate design. This creates a focal point while allowing the remaining rings to complement it.

Experiment with mixed metals

Gone are the days when jewellery had to match perfectly. Mixing yellow gold, white gold, sterling silver, and rose gold creates a fresh, fashion-forward appearance when balanced thoughtfully.

Balance both hands

Instead of stacking every ring on one hand, distribute your rings across both hands for a more elegant and harmonious look. Caring for your stacked rings

Proper maintenance helps preserve the beauty of your jewellery.

Remove your rings while cleaning, exercising, or handling harsh chemicals. Store individual rings in soft pouches or jewellery boxes to prevent scratches. Wipe them gently with a microfiber cloth after use to remove oils and maintain their brilliance.

If your stack includes precious gemstones or diamonds, periodic professional cleaning helps restore their sparkle and ensures the settings remain secure.

ENTERTAINMENT

Vikas Gupta vs Shilpa Shinde: producer blast actor over controversial remarks

Mumbai : Vikas Gupta, who entered as a visitor in the latest episode of ‘Lock Upp 2’, re-ignited his beef with Shilpa Shinde as he blasted her over her remarks on contestant Shivangi Joshi and Ram Kapoor, including comments around “virginity” and “fat”.

Vikas accused Shilpa of spreading toxicity and said that she spreads “negativity everywhere”. He was heard saying: “Aap kitni badtameez hain aapko maalam hai? Aap ne kitni gandi baatein boli uske (Shivangi) ke baare mei? Matlab itni badtameezi... Ram Kapoor ko bola iss mote ke saath soungi main.” He cleared the air saying that it “was not making fun.”

Vikas told Shilpa: “You are this person and you spread negativity everywhere. No one can change you. Not Shilpa ji only Shilpa.”He said: “Kisi ki personal life ko itni badtameezi se nahi karni chahiye. Ek ladki ki virginity discuss kar rahe the on National Television? Sharam nahi aayi”

“(You were discussing someone’s personal life and virginity on National Television? You have no shame)?” he asked.Shilpa had earlier defended herself by saying: “Bahar ki jo sachai hai woh main bol rahi hoon, jisko jaise lena hai le le”“(I’m simply stating the truth about what happened outside. People can take it however they want).”Talking about the show, it is hosted by Farah Khan and Riteish Deshmukh. The finale is set to take place over the weekend.

The show currently has names such as Pamala Serena, Akanksha Chamola, Shilpa Shinde, Akanksha Chaudhary, Ram Kapoor, Yogesh Rawat, Shreya Kalra, Shivangi Joshi, Harshad Chopra, and Varun Yadav, aka Laila, to name a few. The first edition of “Lock Upp” was hosted by Kangana in 2022. Karan Kundrra was introduced as Jailor for the entire season. Munawar Faruqui was named as the winner.The second installment will have 14 inmates, 2 jailers, and 1 lock-up for 6 weeks. As per the rules, inmates must complete tasks to earn in-game currency required for even the necessities such as food, supplies, and privileges.

Kamal Haasan hails Christopher Nolan’s the odyssey, teases Indian tribute



Mumbai : Christopher Nolan’s The Odyssey has found an admirer in Kamal Haasan. Two weeks after the epic drama arrived in theatres, the actor, filmmaker and Rajya Sabha MP took to social media on Thursday to celebrate both the film and its director on the occasion of Nolan’s 56th birthday.

Kamal shared the official title poster of The Odyssey on Instagram with a distinctive tagline that read, “an experience of Kamal Haasan.” Accompanying the poster was a glowing endorsement of the film, one that reflected his long-standing admiration for ambitious cinematic storytelling. “Homer dreamt it. Nolan dared it. I applauded it. Children of cinema, this film belongs to the ages. Must watch!” he wrote, urging audiences to experience the film on the big screen.

The post quickly caught the attention of movie lovers, especially fans of both Kamal Haasan and Christopher Nolan, who have often spoken about the similarities in their passion for pushing cinematic boundaries. While Kamal has never shied away from praising international cinema, his latest endorsement stands out for its poetic tone and wholehearted appreciation of Nolan’s adaptation of one of history’s greatest literary works. The actor also hinted that audiences can expect something more than just a social media post. Without revealing the details, he announced that he would soon share his own tribute after the film’s theatrical run gathers momentum. “As The Odyssey continues its epic voyage across the world, my ode will greet audiences in theatres in India. I’ll share it here soon,” he wrote.Adding his trademark wit, he concluded the note with a playful line aimed at India’s certification process: “P.S. The CBFC got the first preview! It approved.”

Ranbir’s Rama meets Yash’s Ravana in breathtaking ‘Ramayana’ trailer



Mumbai : The makers of Ramayana: Part 1 have unveiled the film’s highly anticipated official trailer, captivating fans and audiences worldwide. The trailer was released in the early hours of July 30, 2026, across five Indian languages, including Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam.

Since the beginning of time, the Trinity Gods rule the three worlds: Brahma - god who creates; Vishnu - god who protects; and Shiva - god who transforms. As the realms of heaven, earth edge toward chaos, the Trinity god Vishnu descends to earth in an avatar to restore balance. This time, Vishnu is reborn as Rama (Ranbir Kapoor), a human prince destined to restore balance.

Opposing him, stands the most formidable, learned, undefeated and immortal demon king Ravana (Yash), blessed by the Trinity themselves, driven by pride and a vengeance powerful enough to shatter the cosmos.Unaware of his true purpose as the only opponent destined to stand up to Ravana in a fateful cosmic design, Rama is the idol of Dharma (duty above all) and the most loved crown prince of Ayodhya, the greatest human

Sonu Sood slams Kangana’s ‘generation gutter’ remark: ‘think before you speak’

Mumbai : Actor Sonu Sood has criticised Kangana Ranaut’s controversial remarks about Gen Z protesters, saying public figures must choose their words carefully and respect the people whose support helps build their careers.

Sonu was responding to questions from reporters on Wednesday when he was informed that Kangana had allegedly described Gen Z protesters as “Generation Gutter.” While he initially said he had not heard her statement, the actor made it clear that he strongly disagreed with such language. Speaking about the role of younger audiences, Sonu said actors and other public figures owe much of their success to the people who support them.

“I haven’t heard her statement. But I feel that these young people are the ones



who make actors, and they are the ones who help you reach this position,” he said. He added that public support remains essential for anyone who works in the public eye.

“As long as they stand by you, you will continue to thrive. If they are not with you, it becomes difficult. That’s why everyone should be taken along,” Sonu said. The actor stressed that this relationship is not limited to films or politics. According to him, people give meaning and relevance to every profession. “Whatever your profession may be, whether you are an actor, a doctor, or anything else, your existence in this world has meaning only as long as people are connected with you,” he said.

After reporters told Sonu about Kangana’s “Generation Gutter” comment, he did not hold back. “If she has said that, then I think it is very shameful. It should

Asit Modi addresses changing comedy in 18 years of Taarak Mehta



Hyderabad : Producer Asit Kumarr Modi has reacted to criticism from a section of viewers who feel that the current episodes of the long-running sitcom ‘Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah’ are not as entertaining as they once were during the initial days of the show. The producer said that perspectives change with time and even the audience evolves.

Speaking exclusively to IANS as the show completed 18 years, Modi said every phase of the sitcom has reflected the changing lives of its characters, which naturally brings a shift in storytelling. “There is a change with time. Earlier, my Tappu Sena was small and there were children in the society. There was mischief and fun. Gradually, everyone grew up in the society, so the story also changed,” he said. The producer added that while some viewers may have moved on, the show has also gained a fresh audience over the years, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. “Some new audience also came. Many people started watching the show during Covid, so they joined us. Some people left and some people came. That’s how it is,” he shared.

Addressing viewers who feel the humour has faded, Modi said he believes the comedy remains intact and suggested that stress could be affecting how some people experience it. “In ‘Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah’, the laughter is still the same. I think those who are not able to feel the laughter are also under a little stress. I would request them to let go of the tension. Watch it with a free mind and you will laugh

too,” he said.Reflecting on the milestone of the sitcom completing 18 years on television, Modi admitted that the achievement still feels surreal. “Thinking about it, it feels like I have achieved something. Eighteen years and now we have reached the 4,774th episode. It feels like it all happened yesterday. Sometimes I wonder how it happened. I believe there is something beyond our thinking. God has made it possible. The entire team works hard continuously and keeps looking for new stories,” he said.

Expressing gratitude to viewers, Modi credited the audience’s unconditional love for the show’s immense popularity across television, OTT platforms and social media. “People continue to watch it even today. Whether it is on OTT platforms, social media or through memes, it makes us very happy that people enjoy ‘Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah’ in different ways even today,” he said.Calling comedy a challenging genre, Modi concluded by saying that making people laugh requires immense effort and dedication. “Comedy is a very serious business. If you want to make people laugh, you have to write well and present it beautifully,” he added.

not have been said,” he responded.Sonu also invoked the saying “Tol mol ke bol,” which translates to weighing one’s words before speaking. “There is a saying, ‘Tol mol ke bol.’ It is very important to think carefully before you speak because the public is another form of God,” he added.

The controversy began after Kangana shared an Instagram story reacting to videos from protests held at Jantar Mantar and other locations.She criticised the protesters’ language and behaviour, calling the clips “puke-inducing” and accusing some participants of flaunting drug use, drinking and financial dependence on their parents.Kangana then referred to them as “Generation Gutter,” claiming that some had “nothing to offer to the system” and were neither good at studies nor capable of becoming homemakers.

Kamal Haasan lauds the odyssey as Christopher Nolan turns 56



Chennai : Actor Kamal Haasan took some time to watch Christopher Nolan’s The Odyssey two weeks after its release. He praised and applauded the film on the occasion of Nolan’s 56th birthday on Thursday.

Kamal Haasan shared his review with his fans and followers via Instagram. He shared the title poster of The Odyssey and added the tagline “An experience of Kamal Haasan.” In the caption, he wrote, “Homer dreamt it. Nolan dared it. I applauded it. Children of cinema, this film belongs to the ages. Must watch. As #TheOdyssey continues its epic voyage across the world, my ode will greet audiences in theatres in India. I’ll share it here soon..”

The film, based on Homer’s ancient Greek poem, follows King Odysseus’ (Matt Damon) dangerous voyage back to Ithaca after the Trojan War. Facing battles with mythical creatures, he attempts to reunite with his wife, Penelope (Anne Hathaway), and son, Telemachus (Tom Holland). The film also stars Zendaya, Robert Pattinson, Charlize Theron, Lupita Nyong’o, John Leguizamo, Elliot Page, Mia Goth, Corey Hawkins, Jon Bernthal, Samantha Morton, Travis Scott, and Benny Safdie.

Sonam Kapoor pen romantic birthday wish for Anand Ahuja



Mumbai : Bollywood fashion diva Sonam Kapoor has penned a note for her husband Anand Ahuja on his birthday and said that she loves him more than he’ll ever know.

Sonam shared a string of images from their relationship journey, starting from their dating days to getting married and becoming parents. “Dear Anand, Thank you for being my safest place, my biggest supporter, my favourite travel companion, my sounding board, my reality check. Happy Birthday to my favourite human. I’d choose you in every lifetime. I love you more than you’ll ever know,” she wrote as the caption.

Sonam married businessman Anand Ahuja in

a grand wedding ceremony in May 2018, after being in a relationship for several years.The couple welcomed their first child, a baby boy, whom they named Vayu, in August 2022. They welcomed their second baby boy, whom they have named Rudralokh Kapoor Ahuja, in March 2026.On the acting front, the actress was last seen in the film Blind in 2023. The crime thriller was directed by Shome Makhija. It also stars Purab Kohli, Vinay Pathak and Lillete Dubey in supporting roles. Blind, a remake of the 2011 Korean film of the same name, centres around a blind police officer in search of a serial killer.

Sonam was lined up to

headline the film adaptation of Anuja Chauhan’s novel “Battle for Bittora,” but the project has remained stalled for years. Produced by her sister Rhea Kapoor, the film was envisioned as a blend of romance and politics.Sonam began her career as an assistant director on filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s 2005 film Black. She made her acting debut in Bhansali’s romantic drama Saawariya in 2007. After facing a string of failures, she tasted success for the first time in 2013 with Raanjhanaa. She was then seen in commercially successful films with supporting roles in the biopics Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Sanju, Prem Ratan Dhan Payo, Neerja Bhanot and Veere Di Wedding.

Lijo Jose Pellissery’s Nayakan set for 4k Dolby Atmos re-release



Kochi : Director Lijo Jose Pellissery’s first feature, Nayakan, is all set for a theatrical comeback. After reports of the film’s restoration surfaced earlier, actor Indrajith Sukumaran has now confirmed that the film will return to cinemas worldwide on September 4. Sharing a new poster on Wednesday, the actor revealed that the re-release will feature a 4K restored print with Dolby Atmos sound, giving audiences an opportunity to revisit the film in a significantly enhanced format.

Released in 2010, Nayakan marked Lijo’s directorial debut long before he emerged as one of Malayalam cinema’s most celebrated filmmakers with films such as Amen, Angamaly Diaries, Ee.Ma.Yau., Jallikattu, Churuli and Nanpaka Nerathu Mayakkam. Written by PS Rafeeqe, the film earned praise from critics upon its original release, particularly for its visual ambition and technical craftsmanship. However, it failed to translate that appreciation into box office success. The film also faced stiff competition at the time, arriving just a day after Thanthonni, which starred Indrajith’s brother Prithviraj Sukumaran. While many viewers admired Nayakan’s striking visual style, others felt it prioritised aesthetics over emotional depth, resulting in a

mixed commercial reception.

Time, however, has been kind to Nayakan. As Lijo Jose Pellissery’s stature as a filmmaker has grown over the years, audiences have revisited his debut with renewed interest. What was once considered an ambitious but flawed experiment has gradually earned cult status, with many now recognising it as an early glimpse of the director’s distinctive cinematic voice. The film follows Varadanunni, played by Indrajith Sukumaran, a gifted Kathakali performer whose life takes a violent turn after his family is brutally

murdered by a gangster. Driven by vengeance, he enters the criminal underworld, setting the stage for a stylised revenge saga that combines Kerala’s classical performing arts with larger-than-life gangster storytelling.

One of the film’s biggest talking points remains its unusual fusion of Kathakali imagery with Hollywood-inspired action sequences. The heightened narrative is matched by equally flamboyant performances from its supporting cast. Siddique delivers a memorable turn as a feared underworld don, while

the late Thilakan commands attention as a powerful Mafia kingpin. The ensemble also features Jagathy Sreekumar, Vijayaraghavan, Lalu Alex, Kalashala Babu, Chemban Vinod Jose, Dhanya Mary Varghese, Sreejith Ravi, Anil Murali, Salu K George, Shivaj, Kiranraj, Tosh Christy, Vijay Menon and Ambika Mohan. Lijo Jose Pellissery himself makes a brief appearance as one of the gangsters.

Beyond its performances, Nayakan won appreciation for Manoj Paramahamsa’s stylish cinematography and Prashant Pillai’s evocative score, both of which played a major role in shaping the film’s distinctive atmosphere. Produced by Anoop Johnson Karedan, the film has since found a loyal audience through television and streaming, with many younger viewers discovering it long after its theatrical run.The upcoming restoration offers both longtime admirers and first-time viewers the chance to experience the film the way it was originally intended. With sharper visuals, immersive Dolby Atmos sound and a growing appreciation for Lijo Jose Pellissery’s early work, Nayakan’s return to the big screen could finally give the film the reception that eluded it 16 years ago.

Irfan Pathan asks, “Don’t Have Any Logical Answer”
Star Player Not Attending Sri Lanka Tests



New Delhi: The 15-man team for the August two-match Test series against Sri Lanka was revealed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday. After 10 years of reliable domestic performances, veteran Madhya Pradesh off-spinner Saransh Jain received his first Test call-up. The spin-bowling all-rounder received recognition for his outstanding performance, while pacer Auqib Nabi—another standout player in domestic cricket—was once again disregarded. Last season, Auqib helped

Jammu and Kashmir win their first Ranji Trophy by taking 60 wickets. As Nabi grabbed eyeballs, Delhi Capitals signed him for the Indian Premier League 2026. He was also included in the India A squad for the Sri Lanka tour and finished there with six wickets in two four-day matches.As India were about to announce the squad for the Sri Lanka Tests, Nabi and his fans must have been hopeful. However, the player was ignored once again. Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan, who has played a crucial role in Nabi’s

cricketing success, expressed his disappointment over the selectors’ decision.“I honestly don’t have any logical answer for Nabi not being picked,” Pathan told Sportstar.“I didn’t understand the selection process. Mohammad Siraj is your go-to bowler. When (Jasprit) Bumrah is not there, Siraj becomes your No. 1 bowler. So, what was the need to play against Afghanistan in a Test that wasn’t even part of the World Test Championship? If domestic performances matter, why didn’t you reward Auqib? That was the best opportunity to play him and test him at that level,” he added. While praising Saransh’s choice, Pathan questioned Nabi’s exclusion once more.What message are we giving domestic cricket players? It’s great that Saransh Jain was selected based on his domestic results. It assures domestic cricket players that their efforts will be appreciated. The 33-year-old was awarded for four or five years of steady work. However, what is the issue with Auqib? The former India all-rounder said, “He has also performed consistently. As a fast bowler, there are even more opportunities because pacers get injured more frequently, so a backup always helps.”

Before the Bihar by-election, there was a lot of drama
Prashant Kishor claims his supporters were arrested

Patna, July 30: High drama erupted in the constituency on Thursday night only hours before voting for the pivotal bypoll in Bankipur, Bihar, started.Prashant Kishor, the founder and candidate of the Jan Suraj Party, said on Thursday that the Bihar Police had detained a large number of his followers at the request of the ruling BJP, which he claimed “fears losing the bypoll” in the Bankipur assembly seat. Kishor, who is running for the seat in his first election, made the accusation only hours before voting was set to start for the bypoll that was required due to the departure of BJP MLA Nitin Nabin. Kishor and his supporters camped at Patna’s Jakkanpur police station, where heated arguments were seen between them and the police, who allegedly refused to disclose the whereabouts of the detained JSP members. Talking to reporters outside the police station, Kishor said, “I have been camping here for the past few hours, and the police are unable to divulge the whereabouts of more than 16 of my supporters who have been rounded up.” “I am not describing these as arrests since there is no record of which of my people have been named in which case. I came to this police station after learning that they had been kept at



Jakkanpur. But here I am told that they have all been taken to different police stations. The SHO here even claims that the police station was not involved in the detentions, which were carried out at the instance of higher-ups,” the former poll strategist alleged.Kishor also alleged that the Station House Officer threatened him and his supporters, saying he would “deal with them after taking off his uniform.”After arguing with the SHO for over half an hour, Kishor said the officer would lose his job if anything happened to his supporters.The Jan Suraj Party founder claimed that “clearly, the ruling BJP is behind these detentions.”“It knows it is going to lose the bypoll. The police can keep a person in custody for 24 hours without producing him before a magistrate. So a plan has

been devised to keep some of my supporters in custody till voting is over,” he claimed. Although the ruling NDA has enlisted “almost all 201 of its MLAs” for the campaign, he said that this “misuse of administrative machinery” cannot guarantee the party’s success.In Bankipur, there are 26 contenders, but Kishor and BJP youth wing head Neeraj Kumar Sinha are thought to be the main contenders.“I am sitting at the police station to highlight the sheer lack of professionalism on the part of the police,” the Jan Suraj Party leader continued. Here, the SHO has attempted to scare us by threatening to use the harsh prohibition statute to book one of my party colleagues. We will undoubtedly push for punishment against the negligent police officers when the bypoll is over.”

Indian Teams in the Final of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships

New Delhi: The Punjab government has received a notification from the Punjab and Haryana High Court about a request to have the pharmacist officer recruitment examination canceled.According to the claim, an organized cheating scheme tainted the exam. On July 28, Justice Sandeep Moudgil issued an interim ruling stating that the recruiting process’s subsequent selection would be contingent upon the petition’s conclusion.

Through attorney Sarthak Gupta, Keshav Kamboj and others filed a suit requesting the cancelation of the July 19 written test for the Department of Health and Family Welfare’s 454 pharmacy officer positions. The petitioners also sought quashing of all consequential steps taken or proposed based on the examination, including the evaluation of answer sheets and preparation or declaration of the result. Citing a police news release from July 19 and a formal complaint filed the next day, they argued that an organized, high-tech, interstate cheating scheme had tainted the exam. They claimed that the anomalies were against Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution.

Five counting machines fail, leaving a Bengal ex-bus driver’s house with Rs 28 crore in cash

New Delhi, July 30: Even counting machines could not keep up with the amount of money that was found at the home of a close acquaintance of a leader of the Trinamool Congress. Five of the devices malfunctioned. At least Rs 28 crore in cash was taken from Minar Mondal’s home in Birbhum, West Bengal.Tulu Mondal, a stone merchant and friend of former Trinamool Congress politician Anubrata Mondal, joined the rebel faction headed by Ritabrata Banerjee earlier this month. Minar Mondal is a bus driver.15 kilogram of gold, which has a market worth of around Rs 21 crore, is part of the haul. The raid began on Wednesday night and the police initially counted over Rs 5.5 crore in cash. By morning the cash pile reached over Rs 28 crore. The police said Minar Mondal is also linked to the stone trade and has connections with stone quarries and crushing units owned by Tulu Mondal. The police are investigating how exactly and from where he got such a huge amount of hard cash. Several senior police officials, leading a large contingent of personnel, were present at the scene throughout the operation. However, the police have not yet officially disclosed the exact reason for the raid or whether it is connected to any alleged illegal financial transactions or other unlawful activities. West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari said on Wednesday that his government’s drive against corruption will continue with a “zero-tolerance policy”.“Commendable job by our Law Enforcement personnel for the crackdown on Sand Mafia. Following a precise operation based on source-based information, Birbhum Police conducted a major raid under Mohammad Bazar PS targeting the hideout of illegal sand mafia Tullu Mondal alias Mohd Nazibuddin. The operation has uncovered staggering amounts of illegally amassed wealth: Cash Recovered So Far: Rs 5.5 crore, with counting still ongoing. Gold Recovered: 15 kg,” Adhikari wrote



in a post on X yesterday. “West Bengal Govt’s ongoing drive against the corrupt will go on with ‘Zero Tolerance Policy against Corruption’ as our guiding principle. Let it be unequivocally clear: no person with a chequered past who has amassed wealth through the exploitation of public resources and hobnobbing with the then ruling political party will be spared. Public wealth belongs to the people, and those who loot it will face the full might of the law. Vigilance and uncompromising action will continue. Crackdown on mafia syndicates will go on,” he added.Sources said Minar was a former state transport department employee and used to work as a bus driver before entering the stone business. They noted it remains unclear how he amassed such a large sum of money and the sources of his income are being investigated. Political mudslinging has followed, with both factions of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) levelling serious allegations against each other over Anubrata Mondal’s alleged closeness to the accused. “That is why questions are being raised about certain leaders who have become ‘good Trinamool’ - seemingly just to stash away this hidden

wealth. I hear that the individuals from whose homes the cash was recovered are close associates of such ‘model’ leaders. The truth must be brought to light. If necessary, the police should interrogate those leaders,” TMC MLA Kunal Ghosh TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said, “Birbhum has always been regarded as the exclusive turf of some former Trinamool minister and the ‘Tiger of Birbhum’; no one else could gain a foothold there. The chief minister should now investigate and uncover the extent of the connection between the accused and these influential figures”.TMC MLA Prasun Banerjee, who is aligned with the Ritabrata faction, appeared to point fingers at the other group. “Based on inputs, the police should be given credit for such a significant cash recovery. He stated, “Police should also look into who was involved and whose money this is.”The incident has also brought attention back to the extravagant wedding that Tulu Mondal planned for his daughter in Birbhum’s Suri in 2024, inviting Bollywood and Bengali actors. According to sources, the wedding cost Rs 100 crore in total, and stars Ankush Hazra, Darshana Banik, Arbaaz Khan, and Zareen Khan were among the guests.

Chief Gianni Infantino On FIFA Stakes Selling Proposal “An Opportunity Not An Obligation”



New Delhi: Gianni Infantino, president of FIFA, stated on Wednesday that it was “an opportunity but not an obligation” to establish a private company to take use of the World Cup’s financial advantages. Infantino defended the plan, arguing that too little of football’s economic value

reached the elements of the game that need it most. The proposal to sell stakes in FIFA’s major events caused shock and indignation throughout the world after it was disclosed on Tuesday. “FIFA Forward Enterprise, or FFE, is essentially a proposition or proposal. In a video posted on Wednesday night, Infantino stated, “It’s a part of a democratic process—a consultation process—and, above all, it’s an opportunity but not an obligation.” “It is a golden opportunity to turbocharge the development of the game globally. But again, it is just an offer, not an obligation.” Infantino insisted the proposal was centred on unlocking “previously uncaptured commercial value” and was condi-

tional on a democratic vote of FIFA’s 211 member associations and approval by the FIFA council.“Capturing that value requires additional expertise, additional insight, distinct from governing and developing the sport,” he said. “It would simply commercialise and organise all FIFA-owned competitions along with sponsorship, broadcast, licensing and new ventures for the benefit of FIFA’s 211 member associations.”According to Infantino, the fans would be content and the game would remain unchanged. Because it would revolutionize football in their nations, fans everywhere would benefit greatly from this game-changing potential, he added.

He protests in Punjab while skipping Rahul Gandhi’s speech

Punjab, July 30: One absence in the Congress group has once again highlighted the factionalism inside the party’s Punjab chapter when the Leader of the Opposition addressed the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.Former chief minister and Jalandhar MP Charanjit Singh Channi chose to attend a rally in Faridkot on Wednesday rather than Rahul Gandhi’s speech in the Lok Sabha.Out of the seven state MPs for the Congress, Channi was the only one who did not attend Gandhi’s address.This is in spite of the fact that Congress parliamentary group leader Gurjit Singh Aujla, an MP from Amritsar, allegedly sent a WhatsApp message to all MPs asking them to attend Gandhi’s address in the House. Channi instead led a Congress dharna outside Baba Farid University in Faridkot against the AAP government over the Pharmacy Officer recruitment exam cheating controversy. The protest saw the presence of several leaders considered close to Channi, including former MLA Kushaldeep Singh Dhillon and a large number of party workers. Their participation was seen as a display of support for Channi’s leadership.

Channi has been locked in a tussle with state Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring.Interestingly, on Wednesday Raja Warring led a protest by Punjab MPs against the AAP government over the exam issue outside Parliament, demanding the resignation of state Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains, but Channi chose to be in Faridkot leading his own protest.The Congress has been trying to bridge the Channi-Warring divide ahead of the polls, and a “secret” meeting of the two leaders was organised by poll strategist Naresh Arora in Delhi on Tuesday.But the meeting seems to have had little impact, as Channi and Warring led separate protests against the Punjab government on Wednesday. The Congress leadership made the decision to keep Warring as the state president on July 1. MP Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa was appointed leader of the core committee, while Channi was assigned to lead the campaign committee. However, a group of former candidates and MLAs from the Punjab Congress, led by Channi and Randhawa, formed an alliance to oust Warring.

Gavit and Basil Write India’s Historic 1-2 Result in the Men’s 100-meter T47 Final at the 2026 Commonwealth Games

Glasgow: In the men’s T47 100m on Day 7 of the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow, India produced an unforgettable one-two finish on the track, with Mohammed Basil Mossing-anakth winning silver and Dilip Mahadu Gavit winning gold. Gavit set a Commonwealth Games record of 10.71 seconds and decisively won the gold medal with a lightning-fast finish over the last 30 meters. According to ESPN, fellow Indian Basil was as spectacular, winning silver with a time of 10.83 seconds after defeating Kevin Santos of England (10.85s), who was awarded bronze. The dominant display saw India complete a historic 1-2 finish on the podium in the para athletics sprint event, add-



ing two more medals to the country’s growing tally in Glasgow. Sprinting to glory! The medals were India’s second gold and third medals of the day after long jumper Murali Srees-shankar had earlier opened the day’s

account with a silver in the men’s long jump.Sreesshankar, who also won silver at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, registered a best leap of 8.09m to finish behind Jamaica’s Tajay Gayle, who claimed

gold with 8.15m. Scotland’s Stephen Mackenzie took bronze with 8.08m, while another Indian, Lokesh, finished fifth with a best effort of 7.97m on his Commonwealth Games debut. The silver medal also made Sreesshankar the first Indian men’s long jumper to win two Commonwealth Games medals. With Gavit’s gold, Basil’s silver and Sreesshankar’s silver, India added three medals on Day 7 of the Games, taking the country’s overall tally to 15 medals—three gold, nine silver and three bronze. India’s gold medals have come through Mirabai Chanu in weightlifting, Sharmila Dhankar in the women’s F57 shot put and now Gavit in the men’s T47 100m.

Calcutta High Court Voter ID, Aadhaar, and PAN Are Not Evidence of Indian Citizenship

Kolkata, July 30: Voter identity cards, Aadhaar, and PAN cards are not definitive evidence of Indian citizenship, according to the Calcutta High Court.The observation was made during the court’s hearing of a habeas corpus petition filed by Suman Molla, who claimed that his nephew Nasir had been detained after his name was removed from the electoral rolls during West Bengal’s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, despite the fact that an appeal against the removal was still pending.The petitioner

claimed that Nasir was an Indian citizen and not a foreign alien by citing his voter identity card, Aadhaar card, PAN card issued by the Income Tax Department, and bank passbook. A division bench comprising Justices Debangsu Basak and Ajay Kumar Gupta held that voter identity cards, Aadhaar and PAN cards are not conclusive proof of Indian citizenship. Observing that a voter identity card only establishes that a person was enrolled in the electoral rolls, the bench noted that Nasir’s name had been deleted

during the 2026 SIR process. The court also held that opening a bank account, by itself, is not proof of Indian citizenship.“Writ petitioner and the detainee are unable to discharge the burden of proof as mandated by the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025,” the court observed. The court denied the habeas corpus petition, stating that it was not inclined to interfere with the authorities’ decision because neither the petitioner nor the inmate had shown Nasir’s Indian citizenship.

Exam for Punjab Pharmacy Officers Postponed Due to Alleged Cheating Ring

Chandigarh, July 30: The Punjab government has received a notification from the Punjab and Haryana High Court about a request to have the pharmacist officer recruitment examination canceled. According to the claim, an organized cheating scheme tainted the exam.On July 28, Justice Sandeep Moudgil issued an interim ruling stating that the recruiting process’s subsequent selection would be contingent upon the petition’s conclusion. Through attorney Sarthak Gupta, Keshav Kamboj and others filed a suit requesting the cancelation of the July 19 written test for the Department of Health and Family Welfare’s 454 pharmacy officer positions. The petitioners also sought quashing of all consequential steps taken or proposed based on the examination, including the evaluation of answer sheets and preparation or declaration of the result. Citing a police news release from July 19 and a formal complaint filed the next day, they argued that an organized, high-tech, interstate cheating scheme had tainted the exam.

CWG 2026: Indian judokas' and support staff's luggage goes missing after flight cancellation



New Delhi: After India’s boxing contingent, luggage of a few Indian judokas and their support staff were found missing after they landed in Glasgow. The ordeal of the team, however, began much before as the British Airways flight they were supposed to board from New Delhi on Tuesday morning got cancelled leaving the athletes and support staff stranded at the airport for almost six hours. “The coaches had to intervene because if they had taken a flight later in the day, the players would have been late for other formalities. The players had to take their bib numbers on Wednesday.

The weigh-in is scheduled on Thursday followed by a draw. The coaches had to plead with the BA officials and that’s how they got an earlier flight,” a top Judo Federation of India (JFI) official told this daily Earlier, the Indian team comprised 14 judokas and four support staff but two of the selected players — Arun Kumar (-73kg) and Tulika Maan (+78kg) — were withdrawn from the team a few days before the departure. While Arun was suspended by National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for doping violation, silver-medallist from the 2022 Birmingham CWG Tulika got suspended

for whereabouts failure. Besides, a few selected judokas were training in Paris ahead of the Games and were scheduled to join the remaining members of the team in Glasgow. “Primarily, luggage of judokas arriving from Paris had gone missing. Their luggage was also being carried by their team members, who were reaching Glasgow from India,” one of the sources said. The judo competition will begin on Friday with Rohit Majgul (-66kg) and Harsh Singh (-60kg) competing in the men’s category while Shraddha Chopade (-52kg), Asmita Dey (-48kg) and Yamini Mourya (-57kg) participating in the women’s section. The sources confirmed that the missing luggage comprised training gears and judogis of the players. Judogis are the traditional uniform worn by the players during training and competition. The JFI has requested the Indian Olympic Association to sort the issue as it will affect the training of athletes ahead of the competition. “The IOA has taken cognizance of the issue and assured the team members that they will soon get the missing luggage,” said the source.

India eyes more medals during action-packed Day 8 schedule at CWG 2026 events

New York : EU sports chief Glenn Micallef on Wednesday hit out at FIFA’s plans to sell a stake in its competitions, including the World Cup, warning international football’s governing body: “Hands off our game.” “The relentless commercialisation of football has become corrosive,” he said on X, adding: “Commercial success should strengthen football, not consume it.” FIFA plans to sell a stake in the business operations of the World Cup and its other competitions through the creation of a semi-private subsidiary.

Micallef said the proposals also raise “important competition law considerations”, noting that the top EU court recognises that sporting rules



are subject to the bloc’s law “where they produce economic effects”. Therefore, the EU executive will study the plans “carefully” within the scope of its competences, he added. “Particular concern arises when FIFA’s regulatory powers become aligned with the financial interests of private entities. When the value of investments depends on

decisions made by FIFA. That raises profound questions about governance, independence and conflicts of interest,” Micallef said. In the early 90s, when the world of video games had initially exploded across the globe, FIFA wanted in. The governing body entered into an agreement with Electronic Arts (EA) to make FIFA-branded games.

EA, who had already made a big splash in the US gaming market, saw an opportunity. That’s how FIFA International Soccer was born in 1993. Every year from then, EA used to make FIFA-titled video games. The cover would typically contain one of the best players at the time with the letters ‘FIFA’ in big, bold lettering. FIFA 98. FIFA 99. FIFA 2000. FIFA 2001. And so on. Around the time when most of India’s millennials had become teenagers, an aspirational country started welcoming personal computers into their homes. Because the pricing was a touch high, a lot of kids used to download the game from torrents or getting a ‘cracked’ CD from their friends.

Hockey India addresses jersey row, defends colour change from iconic blue to saffron



New Delhi: Hockey India has defended its decision to introduce a predominantly saffron playing jersey for the Indian team at the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup after the move sparked widespread backlash from fans and members of the hockey fraternity. Among those to criticise the decision was former India captain Viren Rasquinha, who termed the move “embarrassing” and questioned the logic behind

replacing the country’s iconic blue kit. The unveiling of the new jersey has triggered a debate on social media, with many supporters arguing that blue has long been synonymous with Indian hockey and forms a key part of the team’s identity. Rasquinha echoed those sentiments, saying the national team’s legacy has always been associated with the blue jersey and that fans would prefer to see India

continue in its traditional colours. Responding to the criticism, Hockey India said the decision was taken after detailed consultations with the players, coaches and support staff, insisting that the change was driven primarily by technical considerations rather than aesthetics. “We wish to inform you that the decision to change the uniform colour was based on support staff & players recommendations

and detailed consultations with them. The primary consideration was technical. It was observed that the blue playing uniform tended to blend/merge with the blue synthetic playing surface, which is now the standard colour of international hockey pitches.

This visual similarity affected on-field clarity and visibility for the players,” Hockey India said in a statement. The federation added that several alternatives were considered before the final decision was made. “In light of the above, the coaches and players suggested alternative colours such as yellow or saffron. After careful consideration, saffron was finalised. Apart from addressing the technical requirement, saffron also holds deep significance as one of the colours of our National Flag, symbolising courage, sacrifice and national pride,” Hockey India added.

FIFA probes Argentina over World Cup final conduct and Falklands banner



Paris: VFIFA announced Wednesday that it had opened proceedings into some Argentina players for their behaviour after losing the World Cup to Spain.

A handful of Argentina players and staff confronted their Spanish rivals after the final whistle of the final in New York which Spain won 1-0 after extra time. Argentina players including Nahuel Molina, Thiago Almada and Leandro Paredes, as well as Argentinian official

Roberto Ayala, were involved in the incidents, as was Spain’s Pablo Martin Paez Gavira. Disciplinary proceedings were opened with the quintet facing charges from assault to unsporting behaviour. FIFA will also investigate an incident following Argentina’s 2-1 semi-final victory over England in which players held up a banner that read: “Las Malvinas son Argentinas” (The Falklands are Argentine). FIFA said the proceedings would target

potential breaches of the world governing body’s articles on using a sports event for demonstrations of a non-sporting nature, team misconduct, discrimination and racist abuse, and order and security at matches.

The latter comes “in light of discriminatory chants and gestures, late kick-offs, failure to comply with match and security protocols, the display of inappropriate messages by the team and spectators and the throwing of objects by spectators in relation to several matches of the representative team of Argentina at the FIFA World Cup 2026”. He appeared to shove Spain’s Eric Garcia by the throat. When Spain substitute Gavi jumped in to intervene, Paredes pushed him to the ground. Spain captain Rodri also seemed to be hit in the stomach by Argentina defender Nahuel Molina as he ran past to join teammates celebrating the title win. Molina later crowded Rodri, who was the target of a verbal confrontation by his former Manchester City teammate Nicolas Otamendi. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni and other players rushed in to deescalate the situation.

TNPL 2026: Confident Shahrugh backs young Kovai Kings to deliver strong performances this season

Chennai : VIDA Kovai Kings, one of the top teams in the Tamil Nadu Premier League that is led by the charismatic Shahrugh Khan, unveiled their jersey at a glittering function on Tuesday. Tamil Nadu Human Resources minister D Sarathkumar was the chief guest and unveiled the jersey and lead sponsor Vida in the presence of TJ Srinivasaraj, president of the TNCA and Anantha Karthikeyan the team owner. “All the teams have begun practising for the TNPL and it would be an exciting tournament. If you see all the teams and look at the composition, they are more or less equally balanced and we expect a good fight from all the teams till the finish,” Srinivasaraj told this daily. Shahrugh Khan was confident of a good show by his team. “The composition of the team is good. I always wanted to pick a young team and we have done that this year as well. It’s a new face to the franchise with new owners and



we all feel that we have a team which can do well. You see, the one thing that we can do is get the team to qualify (playoffs). After that, it’s just one game a day. That day, whatever happens, no matter how good the team you are, in a knockout game, you can’t do much, put your best effort,” pointed out Shahrugh Khan, who has won the title twice. “I feel the core group has changed now in

the last two years. Before that, we had similar players. Obviously, the big auction, the auction dynamics, everything changed. But you can’t help it after a point in time. It’s important that we understand what’s important for the game and do what’s important at that point in time. That core group has changed. It’s important that we build another core group,” he added.

Indian football team likely to play Brazil in Kolkata for major international friendly

New Delhi: The Indian football team could be set for a dream showdown against five-time world champions Brazil, with the Seleco reportedly scheduled to face the Blue Tigers in Kolkata on October 3. According to a report from Brazilian outlet GE Globo, Brazil are set to close out their 2026 roster with three friendlies, two in Australia and one in India. The team is already confirmed to play two friendlies against Australia on September 25 and 29 in Townsville and Brisbane respectively. The report states that the third match of Brazil’s October FIFA window will be against India in Kolkata.

The fixture, if confirmed, would be one of the biggest matches in the history of Indian football and bring Brazil’s star-studded national team to a city that has long had a deep connection with the Selecao. Brazil’s visit to India has been the subject of growing speculation over the past week. Earlier reports from ESPN



Brazil had suggested that the Brazilian Football Confederation, CBF, was in advanced negotiations to stage a friendly in Kolkata, although the opponent had not been finalised at the time. The latest report from Brazil, however, claims that India will be the opponent and that the match is scheduled for October 3. The proposed fixture would come after the Brazilian team’s World Cup campaign generated enormous interest among

Indian fans, particularly in Kolkata.

The city once again turned yellow and green during the tournament, with Brazilian flags, murals and cut-outs of players appearing across neighbourhoods. The scenes of thousands of fans celebrating Brazil’s matches reportedly caught the attention of the CBF and helped drive discussions about bringing the national team to India. Kolkata’s relationship with Bra-

zilian football also stretches back decades. Pele famously played at Eden Gardens in 1977 when New York Cosmos faced Mohun Bagan, an event that remains part of the city’s football folklore. If the October 3 fixture goes ahead, however, it would be something entirely different:

Brazil’s senior national team facing India on Indian soil. For the Blue Tigers, it would also represent a rare opportunity to test themselves against one of the most decorated teams in international football. Brazil’s two September matches against Australia are already confirmed, with the CBF having announced the fixtures in Townsville and Brisbane. GE Globo’s latest report now points towards Kolkata as the destination for their next stop. An official confirmation and the final contractual details are still awaited. But if the report proves accurate, Kolkata could be preparing for one of the biggest nights in Indian football history.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi named vice-captain as East Zone announce Duleep Trophy squad

New Delhi : Teenage prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has been entrusted with a major responsibility after being named East Zone’s vice-captain for the 2026-27 Duleep Trophy. The 15-year-old will serve as deputy to India wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan in a squad that also boasts veteran fast bowler Mohammed Shami. Sooryavanshi’s appointment stands out as the biggest takeaway from the squad announcement, reflecting the confidence se-

lectors have in one of India’s fastest-rising batting talents. The Bihar youngster has enjoyed a remarkable rise over the past year, earning praise for his fearless approach and explosive stroke-making despite his age. He was also named as the vice-captain for Bihar during the Ranji Trophy 2025-26 season for the first two rounds. The left-handed opener recently broke into the Indian senior team, making his T20I debut against England in Manchester earlier

this month. He followed it up with a memorable knock of 81 off 49 balls against Zimbabwe in Harare. The news of his appointment as East Zone vice-captain comes on the same day he made a big jump of 230 places in the latest ICC T20I rankings.

For captain Ishan Kishan, the Duleep Trophy presents an opportunity to build on his return to the national set-up. Having been part of India’s triumphant T20 World Cup squad earlier this year,



the wicketkeeper-batter will be keen to deliver consistent performances in domestic cricket as he looks to cement his place across formats. Experienced pacer Mohammed Shami also headlines the East Zone squad.

The Bengal quick has not represented India since the Champions Trophy in March and was overlooked for the recently announced Test squad for the Sri Lanka series. A strong showing in the Duleep Trophy could help

the seasoned seamer remind selectors of his value in the longer format. Shami will spearhead a pace attack that also includes Bengal teammates Mukesh Kumar and Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal, giving East Zone a formidable fast-bowling unit. The batting department features another familiar name in Abhimanyu Easwaran. The Bengal opener has consistently piled up runs in domestic cricket and remains on the fringes of India’s Test squad.